

PARIS: 8 AFFORDABLE BISTROS • TEMPTATIONS OF TRAVEL • NEW ORLEANS HOTEL DEALS



NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

SAN FRANCISCO ON
6 COUPONS A DAY

PAGE 36



TRAVELER

50 TOURS

OF A LIFETIME

ALL TRAVEL, ALL THE TIME | May-June 2011

Best of
GUIDED
TRAVEL

PLUS
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Great Trip
Gurus

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CROATIA

A WRITER
SEARCHES FOR
HIS ROOTS ON
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IN WYOMING
WITH
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Montreal

DISCOVERING THE CITY'S
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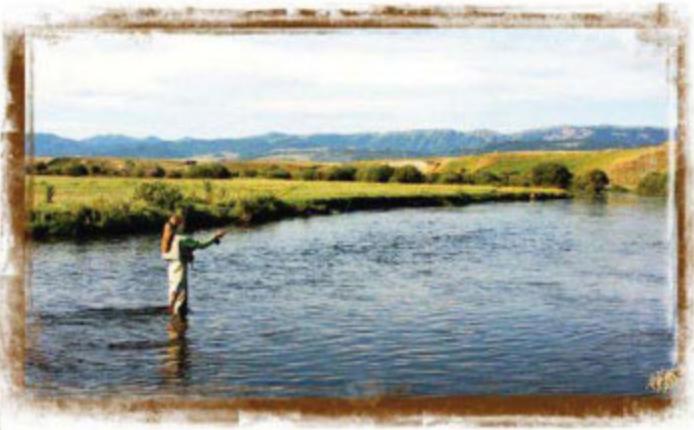




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Rafting the Payette River (*left*), fly-fishing in the Teton River (*above*)

Idaho ADVENTURES

Bring Families Together

Wherever you travel in Idaho, you'll find abundant recreational adventures amid spectacular scenery. **Boise**, Idaho's capital and largest city, offers urban delights and rural escapes for couples, families, and friends.



Downtown Boise

The city sits at the base of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, which are crisscrossed with mountain biking trails that will challenge the most seasoned cyclists and charm the beginning biker. The vibrant downtown is bordered by a 25-mile greenbelt prime for biking, jogging, or strolling. Score fresh flowers, herbs, and veggies, and browse one-of-a-kind art pieces, jewelry, and photography at the Saturday Morning Market. This Treasure Valley gem

occupies three full city blocks during the summer months.

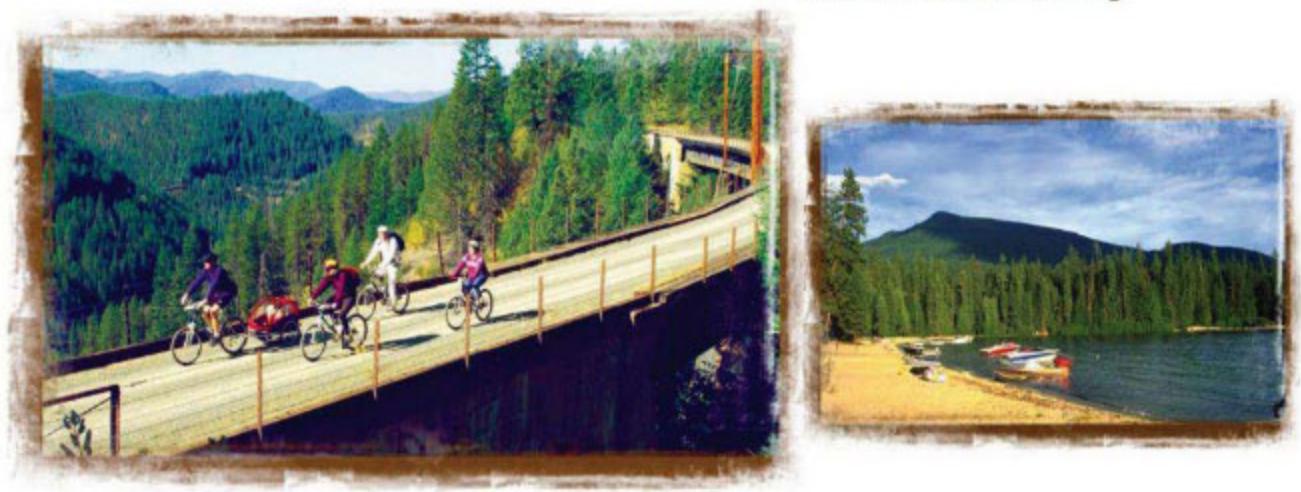
Travel northeast to **Sun Valley** where, on the edge of the untamed wilderness, you'll find the rugged yet refined resort area of Sun Valley-Ketchum. It has the old-world charm and ambiance of a European alpine village, with cozy lodging, attractive shopping, an award-winning golf course, championship tennis club, and a year-round outdoor ice skating rink. Take an early morning horseback ride and watch the sun rise as you head to one of Sun Valley-Ketchum's four-star continental restaurants for breakfast.

Some of Idaho's most exhilarating and beautiful terrain can be found near **Coeur d'Alene** in the north. For those who seek the unbeaten path, secluded camping areas are only a day's hike away. Or spend the day relaxing in one of the city's world-class spas or teeing off at the world's only floating golf green.

Idaho has more than 3,000 heart-pounding white-water river miles, the most of any other state in the lower 48. Breathe in the emerald green hillsides of northern Idaho, the bold mountains of central Idaho, or the open vistas of the south from the seat of a kayak or raft. To take a closer look at Idaho's natural beauty, outdoor recreation, and exciting city life, go to visitidaho.org. To order a free travel guide, call 800-VISITID.



Adventures In Living



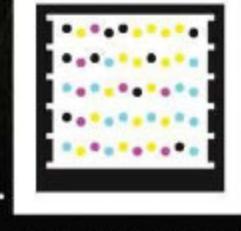
Route along the Hiawatha Bike Trail (*above*), Priest Lake State Park (*right*)

It's *amazing* what an **entire STATE** can do for a guy.

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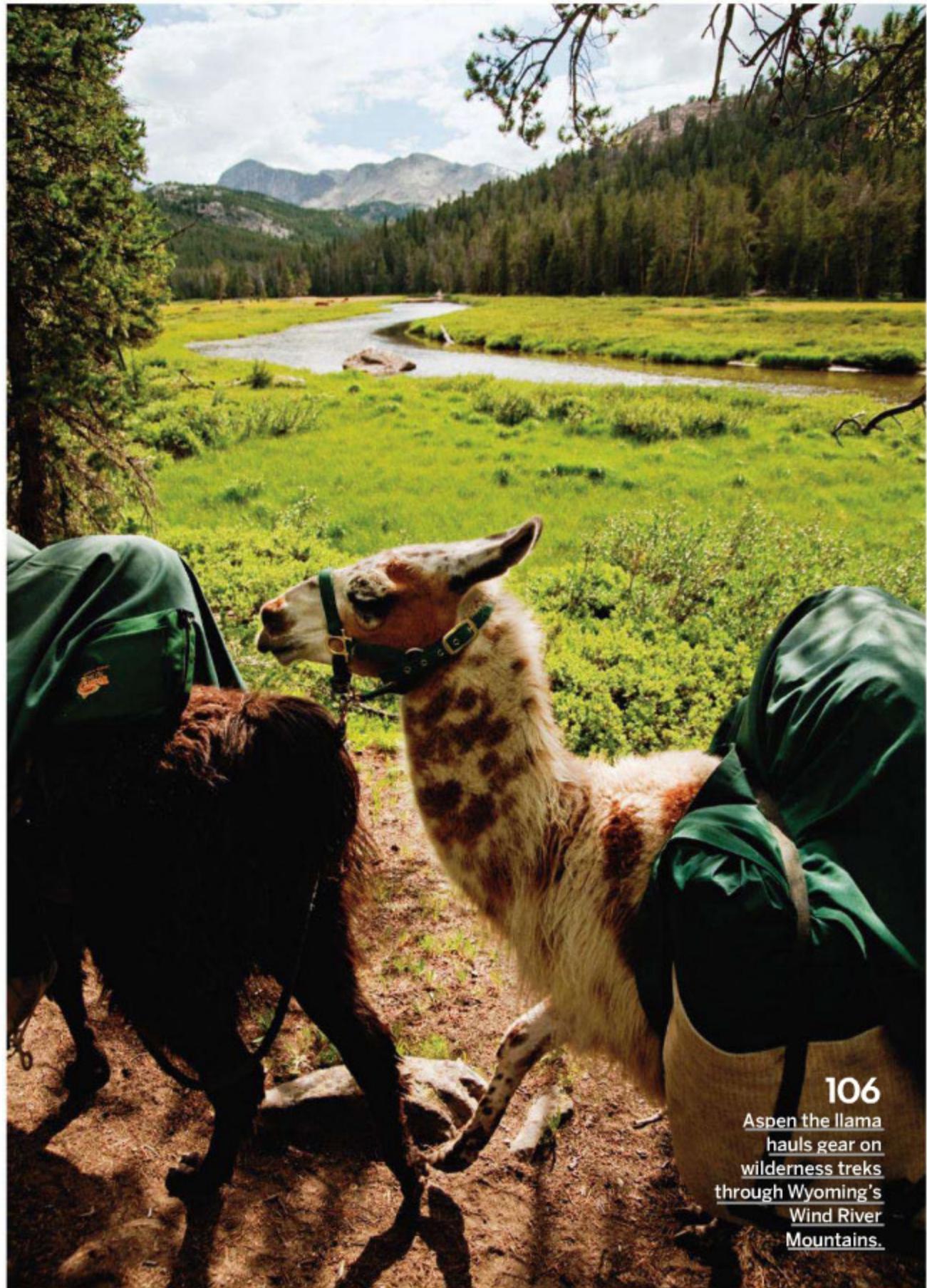
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Photographs by DAWN KISH



On the Cover:

Budapest is a highlight on a Tour of a Lifetime along the Danube, page 82. Photograph by Maurizio Rellini/SIME.



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Aspen the llama hauls gear on wilderness treks through Wyoming's Wind River Mountains.

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NATIONAL
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TRAVELER

23rd ANNUAL

PHOTO CONTEST

WWW.NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/TRAVELERPHOTOCOMTEST

Seascapes animated with wildlife, such as this scene shot at Berneray Island in Scotland's Outer Hebrides, can be prizewinners.



To obtain Official Rules, go to www.nationalgeographic.com/travelerphotocontest. Residents of Arizona, New Jersey, Vermont, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, the Province of Quebec, Sudan, Syria, and where prohibited are ineligible. Employees of the National Geographic Society and their immediate families or persons living in the same household of such individuals, are ineligible. Contest begins April 5, 2011, at 12:01 a.m. PDT and ends July 11, 2011, at 11:59 p.m. PDT. Entry fee of \$15 applies to each entry received on or before 11:59 p.m. PDT on June 27, 2011. An additional \$10 fee is required for each entry received between 12:00 a.m. PDT June 28, 2011 and 11:59 p.m. PDT July 11, 2011. CONTEST IS VOID WHERE PROHIBITED. See Official Rules for details.

contest categories

travel portraits Locals working, playing, celebrating.

outdoor scenes Landscapes, aerials, wildlife, waterscapes.

sense of place Pictures that evoke the essence of a destination.

spontaneous moments Fun, quirky, surprising, and unrehearsed moments.

ONTEST

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Entry Fee

\$15 per entry.

Deadline

June 27, 2011. Additional \$10 per entry for an extended deadline of **July 11, 2011.**

Submissions

Submit digital entries online at www.nationalgeographic.com/travelerphotocontest.

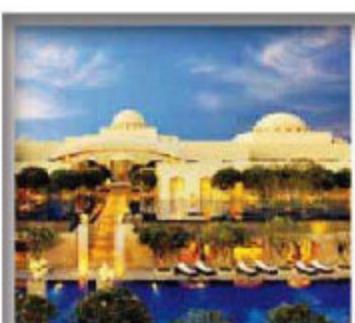
Print entries are no longer accepted.

More Information

The website also features FAQs, entry forms, contest rules, and regulations.

Questions?

See the FAQs online or e-mail ngrtravelercontest@ngs.org



Bonus

Winning images will be showcased in the November/December 2011 issue of *National Geographic Traveler* magazine.

1st Prize

14-day expedition for two to the British and Irish Isles aboard the *National Geographic Explorer*



2nd Prize

Nine nights in a selection of Trident Hotels in India, including stays in Agra, Delhi, Jaipur, and Udaipur



3rd Prize

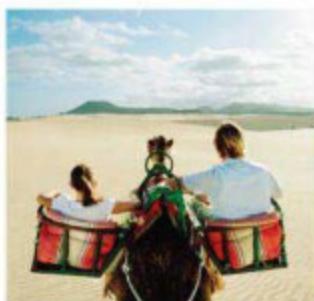
Intensive 2½-day photo workshop with Santa Fe Workshops



7 Merit Prizes

\$200 gift certificates to B&H Photo





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“When I travel, I can’t help myself. I turn into a grown-up version of the toddler who grabs fistfuls of chocolate birthday cake with both hands. More! **”** —Real Travel, page 14

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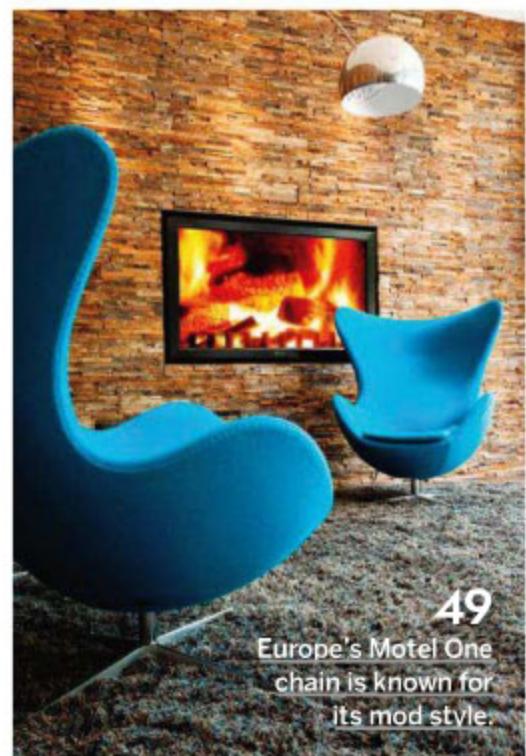
A weekend trip to **San Francisco** planned entirely with online coupons... Top five scenic golf holes... 48 hours: **Monaco**... Go now: **Louisville**... Budget European hotel chains... New lodgings in **Portugal**... Hotel deals in **New Orleans**... **Paris**'s petit bistro... Family summer vacation ideas, from **Oregon** to **Maine**... Kid-friendly **Baltimore**... Port of call: **Taormina**... Urban running trails... Less traveled routes in **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**... **New Mexico** road trip... A wind-whipped night in **Patagonia**... Authentic Indian hand block textiles... The lavender fields of **Provence**.

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A Chinese opera troupe in Hong Kong.



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Europe's Motel One chain is known for its mod style.

BACKSTORY

To All the Guides I've Loved Before

Duncan in Scotland, Mauricio in Patagonia, Heath in Tasmania, Jay in Wyoming, Ibrahim in Iran, George in Kenya. As we were planning this year's "Tours of a Lifetime" feature (page 82), knowledgeable and, yes, good-looking guides from my own past trips kept coming to mind. (See a few of my crushes, above, with me at bottom, center.) ¶ I realized that the people whose job it is to show us their corners of the world and to keep us safe are as integral to a great trip as the place itself. And yet we rarely consider guide quality when we choose a tour, so busy are we examining the itinerary to ensure it hits everything on the bucket list and looking up the hotels on TripAdvisor. But a World Heritage site or plush pillows don't make a trip sublime. The guide is the X factor. ¶ Here's to the men and women who showed me how to tell wombat scat from wallaby poo; who explained the complex workings of an African termite colony; who told true tales of love and conquest in fifth-century B.C. Persia so that I was hanging on to every word; who taught my sons how to shoot an Amazonian blowgun; who literally stood between me and a hippo contemplating a charge. And who demonstrated time and again the ties that bind us all. —Norie Quintos, senior editor



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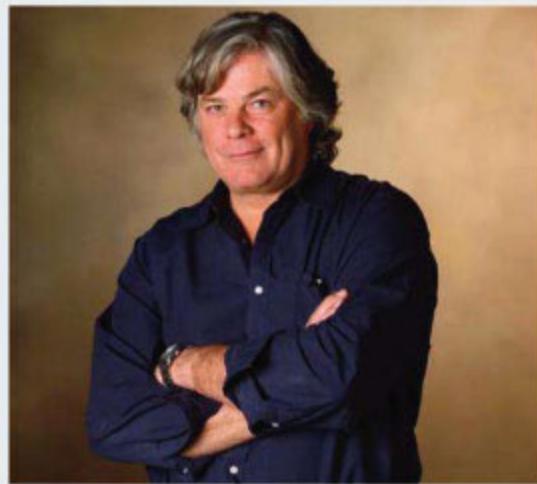
EDITOR'S NOTE

Leave Your Comfort Zone

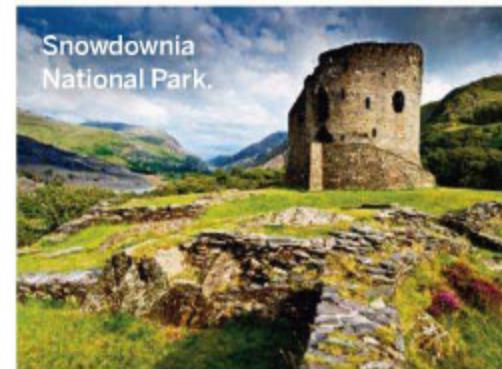
I recently spoke in Berlin at Internationale Tourismus Börse (ITB), which bills itself as the world's leading travel trade show. It attracts some 180,000 industry professionals from around the globe. As I listened to the talks, speaker after speaker brought up the word "authenticity." The search for the authentic has been part of the fabric of this magazine since its birth 27 years ago. But, as more of the world becomes homogenized, authenticity is increasingly difficult to find. They also spoke, against the backdrop of unfolding events in the Middle East, of a need to become more connected, to better appreciate our cultural differences, to use travel as a way to build bridges between ideologies and cultures. Yet many tourists travel in a kind of bubble, happy to slip in and out of a place without digging too deeply into its culture, quick to accept common stereotypes about the people and destinations they visit.

Our sixth annual "Tours of a Lifetime," starting on [page 82](#), is something of an antidote to that attitude. It showcases the world's best guided trips, ones that enable travelers to really connect with the essence of a place and to experience the foreign as fully as possible. In many cases, that discovery is enhanced by a new breed of tour guide—one who can interpret, inspire, and interact and who is a welcome alternative to those guides from hell who bore us silly with a paint-by-numbers litany of stale facts and figures. On [page 89](#) we pay homage to ten masters of the guiding art.

Meanwhile, we invite you to discover the new experiences these tours offer—visiting a witchcraft oracle in Ghana, sailing the Great Bear rain forest in British Columbia, meeting the traditional Huli people of Papua New Guinea, exploring Tanzania's Olduvai Gorge with the paleoanthropologist who unearthed the 3.2-million-year-old skeleton "Lucy" there. We hope our 50 tours will inspire you to leave your comfort zone and discover the unfamiliar. —Keith Bellows, Editor



NAT GEO TRAVEL HIGHLIGHTS



Snowdonia
National Park.

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GEOBEE CHALLENGE

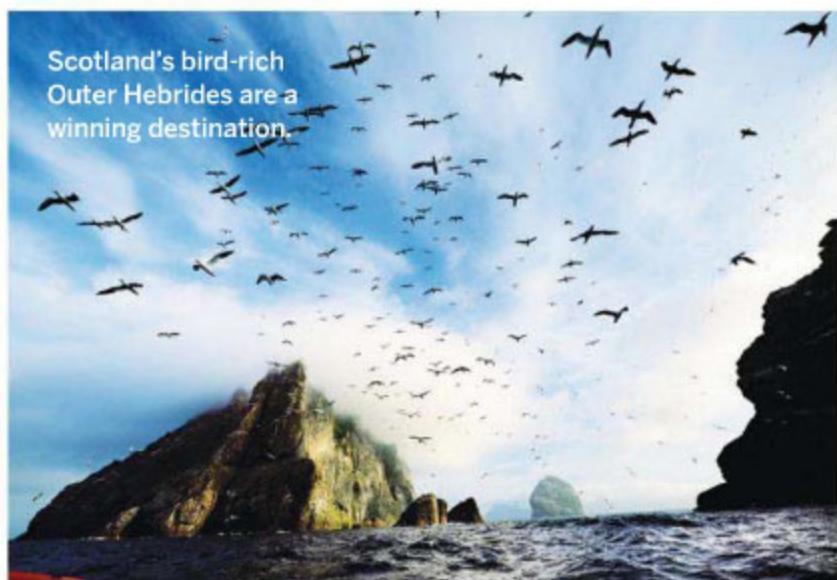
Are you smarter than a National Geographic GeoBee contestant? Test your knowledge with National Geographic's first Android app, GeoBee Challenge. The educational game draws from the official list of past National Geographic GeoBee questions. Three types of game play make sure kids and adults really know their Faroe Islands from their Firth of Forth and never get bored. In the multiple-choice round, answers come from a library of over 1,000 GeoBee questions.

› market.android.com/details?id=com.concentricsky.android.geobee

TRAVEL WRITER OF THE YEAR

Our Trip Lit columnist Don George continues his series of conversations with fascinating travel writers at NG headquarters in Washington, D.C. On May 12, George talks storytelling with actor, director, and contributing editor Andrew McCarthy, the 2010 Lowell Thomas Travel Journalist of the Year.

› events.nationalgeographic.com



Last chance!
Enter the *Traveler* Photo Contest for a chance to win one of two great trips—including a 14-day expedition to Britain and Ireland. Find contest rules on [page 6](#).

Our Mission: National Geographic Traveler reports on destinations of distinction and character, and we support efforts to keep them that way—believing that to enhance an authentic "sense of place" will benefit both travelers and the locations they visit. For more information, visit travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable.



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downmagz.com

A Taste of France

ALAN RICHMAN'S culinary tour of northern France ("A Normandy Invasion," March 2011) induced cravings. "I am an American living overseas, and Normandy is one of my favorite places to go in France," wrote Erika Torres of Baumholder, Germany. She recommends a visit to Port-en-Bessin: "They have a great market with tons of fish, cheese, and my favorite fig jam." Heather Elliott was inspired to write a blog post about how food can create connections. "[The story] isn't about what ended up on the author's plate... it's what happens when



Good taste: Local dining in Normandy promotes cultural understanding.

people come together in the exploration of food. When the locals opened up to this traveler about places where they liked to eat, they also gave him a new way of seeing the people of France. Of course, sometimes words aren't even necessary. You can just point at the menu and smile."

Cruise Control

Christopher Elliott's column about add-on fees charged by cruise ships (*The Insider*, March 2011) struck a chord. "While it's true that cruise lines are offering many more options at an additional cost to passengers, the cruise experience continues to include fantastic

entertainment, activities, dining, and service, and still remains one of the best values available," wrote **Bruce Mardis** of Odenville, Alabama. "My advice: Book with a travel professional who will explain what is included in the fare as well as the options. It's much less stressful than trying to book online and will provide a better value."

"Elliott's take rings true not only with passengers but also with those of us who live in embarkation and destination ports of what Elliott rightly calls floating cities," wrote **Georgia Meagher** of Charleston, South Carolina. "To preserve the delicate balance of life, environment, and



LETTER OF THE MONTH

“Thank you for the article on dim sum in San Francisco. We traced the suggestions almost verbatim, and my husband and I finally felt 'in the know' eating in Chinatown. **”**

—Maureen Meyer, Seattle, Washington, on *Taste of Travel*, March 2011

painstakingly preserved heritage that still exist in places like my hometown, many of us find that we, too, must say 'no' to ever-increasing demands of the cruise industry—and if not an outright 'no,' at least a firm, accountable 'enough.'"

A Sinking Feeling

"This article is yet another smack in the face, making me admit the fragile reality of our planet's current state," **Kristina Barton** of Fairfax, Virginia, wrote in response to "As the World Sinks" (*Tales From the Frontier*, March 2011). "Not only have I now placed the Maldives on my travel wish-list, but I've also noted that I must seek out carbon-negative lodgings."

Dennis Dong of Columbia, South Carolina, was intrigued by Keith Bellows's Editor's Note in the March issue about his recent round-the-world trip based on our Places of a Lifetime issue. "However, when I read 'As the World Sinks,' I couldn't help but think that [Bellows's] trip must



The Maldives.

not have followed sustainability guidelines," he wrote. "It would have been great for you to indicate that it had been carried out sustainably, and that you really believe what one of your writers was eloquently promoting. Will *National Geographic Traveler* support sustainable travel in its sponsored tours?" Editor Keith Bellows responds: "This magazine has always been a proponent of sustainable travel, and while the Maldives story and the jet trip may seem in conflict, the Places of a Lifetime journey charges for carbon offsets and all of its profits go toward our mission programs, which fund projects that help preserve the planet." To learn more about our mission programs, visit: www.nationalgeographic.com/donate.



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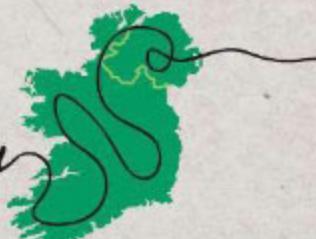


A vacation isn't an Irish vacation without a detour or two.

Northern Ireland is full of on-the-way spots to pull you in. So, from Belfast, head to the Giant's Causeway, but if the Ulster American Folk Park or the links at Royal Portrush call your name along the way, go on and answer.

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Lead Us into Temptation

One-of-a-kind treats, like Argentina's *dulce de leche* ice cream, offer an edible tour of local tastes.

STEAK FOR DINNER. Steak for lunch. And for dinner, again. *Bife de lomo*, charred and crusty outside, pink and soft within, oozing sepia-colored juices. Mmmmm. I reach across the red-checkered tablecloth for a spoonful of garlicky *chimichurri* sauce to slather over the meat. Meanwhile, a mustached waiter in a long white apron glides silently and professionally to my elbow and tops off my glass of Malbec. ¶ At home, I'm not much of a meat-eater; I do the healthy, semi-veggie thing, grains and greens, indulging in a steak

once every few months or so. However, since arriving in all-meat-all-the-time Buenos Aires, Argentina, I've transformed, like a werewolf under a full moon, into a ravenous, prowling carnivore. I know a steady diet of beef is not in my best interest, but what can I do? I've succumbed to the temptation of perfectly grilled *bife*.

Oh temptation, thy name is travel! At home, I'm a model of temperance. But on the road, self-restraint seems to be one of the things, like toothpaste, that I forget to pack. When I travel, I can't help myself: I turn into a grown-up version of the toddler who grabs fistfuls of chocolate birthday cake with both hands. More! All for me!

Here in Buenos Aires, my chocolate cake is steak. A friend has loaned me her flat—which I'm sharing with Clarissa, another acquaintance of hers from New York—in the city's Palermo district, a neighborhood of faded apartment buildings where well-coiffed matrons parade equally well-coiffed poodles along streets lined with jacaranda trees. The area is home to a clutch of restaurants specializing in beef—and another treat I should avoid but can't: those addictive little Argentine croissants called *medialunas* (half-moons). A terrific café across the street from my temporary digs makes them fresh daily; every morning I pop in there for *medialunas* with coffee, which I enjoy at a sidewalk table with a copy of the local newspaper. Usually I do this with Clarissa. Occasionally I succeed in talking her into accompanying me on my Buenos Aires steak marathon. But only occasionally.

Travel's temptations take many forms, and Clarissa is following hers. "Guess what I found!" she exults one morning. "A shop that has—hold your breath—*dulce de leche*-and-brownie gelato." Clarissa is using her trip to cultivate a connoisseurship of Buenos



Yum: Is indulging in exotic ice cream flavors justifiable travel behavior?

At home I'm a model of temperance. But on the road, self-restraint seems to be one of the things I forgot to pack.

Aires's ice-cream shops. Every day she stops at a few, always ordering Argentina's famous flavor, the slightly salty, rich caramel ambrosia known as *dulce de leche*, or sweetness of milk.

I congratulate her on the find and write down the location of the *heladería* (ice-cream parlor) on a napkin. Then I shove the napkin into the bottomless pit of my shoulder bag, hoping it won't resurface until I'm far away from Argentina, preferably on another continent. I worry that if I add yet another of Buenos Aires's many temptations to my expanding

travel portfolio, my stomach will burst.

While a lot of my enthusiasm for excess goes into the consumption of foods, edible treats aren't the only temptation I'll give in to and in all likelihood overdo. In Thailand, I have massages—two-hour massages—every single day I'm there. In Japan, I make a beeline for the nearest hot spring and end up staying in the water until my skin turns alarmingly red. And in India, Turkey, Mexico, or any other country with old-fashioned, crammed-with-tiny-shops, bargain-with-the-locals markets, I can't stop shopping until I've completely exhausted my supply of rupees, lira, or pesos. (The recent introduction of ATMs into many of these traditional markets is killing me.)

What is it about traveling that brings out the Cookie Monster lurking inside of us? Part of it, I'm sure, is that travel loosens our inhibitions. The "What the heck, I'll do it, I'm on vacation" syndrome seems universal to me. Entire tourism industries depend on it, from the airport duty-free shops that tempt travelers to buy the luxury watches, scarves, and jewelry they'd hesitate to splurge on at home, to those dark-side-of-travel temptations: drug and sex tourism.

The allure of consumption, while they are CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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The Ape and Leech Tour

The fate of Borneo's jungles will determine which species you'll remember most.

HERE'S A TIP I picked up watching Tarzan movies as a kid: When hiking an unfamiliar jungle trail with numerous intersecting paths and arteries leading who knows where, it's wise to somehow mark your route so you can find your way out when you inevitably get lost. But on this trek, breaking branches, tearing leaves, or dropping bread crumbs would be redundant. The oppressive heat and humidity of Borneo's Danum Valley Conservation Area have me sweating so profusely that I could literally follow my own

river of sweat back to the rain forest lodge. I'm like a human snail leaving a trail of salty slime.

This is supposed to be a moderate, half-day hike through the rain forest, past waterfalls and mountain streams, up to a sacred burial cave, and then on to the top of a cliff above the forest canopy for a scenic overview of the valley. Let me interrupt the tourism brochures here for a reality check. Scenic? Yes. It's a protected, pristine, 60-million-year-old rain forest with hundreds of species of trees and plants, over 300 species of birds, more than a hundred species of mammals, and scores of different types of reptiles and amphibians. If you wanted to stock Noah's Ark, the Danum Valley would be a good place to start the boarding process. But, a moderate hike? Not exactly, unless you're Tarzan or Sheena, Queen of the Jungle.

About three hours into the trek we hit a steep section. Climbing it is like working out on a StairMaster in a steam bath. The trail rises at a 45-degree angle, no switchbacks in sight. I'm gasping as though trying to swallow a lifetime's worth of oxygen with each breath. Attempting to strike a deal with my body to get me through this, I promise to give up ice cream and go on a serious diet, beginning with a day of fasting. But with my next gasp, a couple of bugs fly in my mouth, breaking my no-eating promise.

I didn't come to Borneo for the exercise or the bugs. I'm here because this island in Southeast Asia—divided among Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia—is one of only two in the world where orangutans can still be found in the wild. (Sumatra is the other island.) In Malay, orangutan means "man of the forest." But these great apes are running out of forest. Logging for timber and clear-cutting forests for palm oil plantations are destroying habitat. With



"Man of the forest": To survive in the wild, orangutans need rain forest.

**If you wanted
to stock
Noah's Ark,
the Danum
Valley would
be a good
place to start
the boarding
process.**

poaching for the pet trade adding more pressure, orangutans are now endangered, their numbers down to an estimated 60,000.

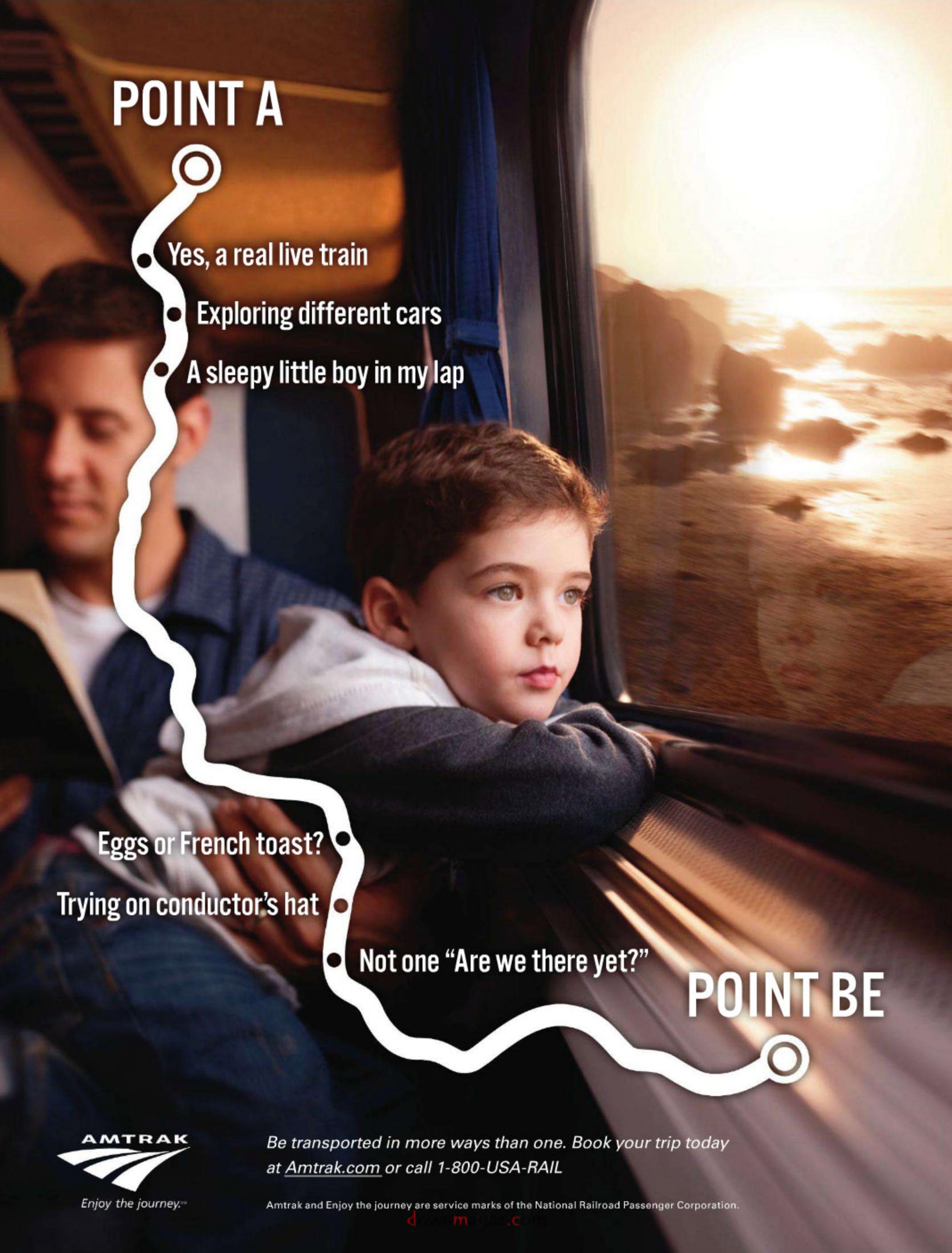
My first stop is the Rasa Ria Resort outside Kota Kinabalu in Malaysian Borneo. Here, a small rehabilitation center takes in orangutans confiscated from poachers. The center trains the animals to survive in the wild so they can be released into a protected rain forest. To help support the project, tourists can pay to watch feedings twice daily.

While I'm there, two young apes quickly finish their fruit and sugarcane snacks then take to the trees above us to put on a Cirque du Soleil performance. They begin with a chase sequence, leaping from tree to tree, and finish with an aerial ballet hanging to the tops of tall, thin trees that bend and sway, almost touching the ground before catapulting the orangutans skyward.

Next stop is the Sepilok Nature Resort next to an even larger orangutan research facility. Here you can expect extended viewings with good photo opportunities. I watch staffers place bananas on a feeding platform, which is like putting wedding dresses on the sale table at Filene's. A free-for-all ensues in which the choicest items are ripped from the hands of weaker animals, who must settle for leftovers.

In the wild, orangutans don't live in large family groups like the other great apes. They're more solitary, and spotting them is much more difficult. But I want to try, which explains why I'm now in Danum Valley, feeling a bit like Martin Sheen in *Apocalypse Now*, moving through a jungle filled with unseen enemies.

My first full day in this rain forest sweatfest results in exactly one hour of orangutan watching—of a mother and baby nesting in a tree about 75 yards from me. I spend most of the hour staring at the leaves of the nest while the orangs sleep, only occasionally



POINT A



- Yes, a real live train
- Exploring different cars
- A sleepy little boy in my lap

Eggs or French toast?

Trying on conductor's hat

Not one "Are we there yet?"

POINT BE



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glimpsing a raised arm or leg. During the night they move off deeper into the forest, the tasty fruits that lured them and other orangutans to this area no longer in season. With less chance of seeing Borneo's star primates in the wild, I enlist Mohammad Salehjuddin Jais, or Din, as he's called, to guide me on a "scenic jungle trek" that promises to take in waterfalls.

I'm already swimming in my own sweat by the time we reach the first waterfall. So I drop my pack, kick off my shoes, and plunge into the pool, clothed. Emerging cooled and refreshed, I hold out high hopes for the rest of the hike turning out memorable. I should have wished for pleasant instead. A few minutes later Din calmly observes, "There's a leech on your neck." It's a tiger leech. There must be millions of them in the Danum Valley.

Leeches are little heat-seeking missiles with an uncanny ability to locate and attach themselves to warm-blooded creatures. When they bite, leeches inject a kind of anesthetic that numbs the victim to their presence. They also inject an anticoagulant so the blood continues to flow freely after they're no longer attached, explaining why I look like a character in the *Twilight* series with blood still dripping down my neck 20

minutes after Din removes the leech. Soon I'm finding leeches on my pants, socks, shoes, shirt, and backpack.

One leech drops on the lens of my camera and starts wriggling toward my hand while I'm trying to take a picture. I remove 15 leeches before losing count. Back in my room, I discover one last tiger leech on my stomach. My memorable adventure does earn me an official Danum Valley Blood Donor Certificate issued at the lodge.

I'm not nearly as successful finding orangutans as I am at finding leeches, but I do see some, and that gives me hope that these great red apes still have a chance for survival. But it won't be easy. Although orangutans are protected by law in Malaysian Borneo, money has its own law, which can basically be summed up as, "Everything has a price." Right now selling off the rain forest is making a few people very rich. The message that has to be driven home is: Once the trees are gone and with them the orangutans, what do the people have left? Tourists will pay to take the orangutan tour, but if it's just a leech tour, business will really drop off. ■

Contributing editor BOYD MATSON hosts *National Geographic Weekend* on radio.

REAL TRAVEL

CONTINUED FROM [PAGE 14](#)

powerful, don't explain the deeper hunger I often feel on the road. I don't just want to accumulate stuff on my travels—I want to absorb the places I visit, make them a part of me. Yielding to the temptation of a local pastry I don't need or an artwork I'm not sure will fit on my wall somehow satisfies that hunger.

A few years ago, down in Havana, Cuba, something happened that helped me understand why travel makes me so insatiable. I was attending a Santería ceremony that featured some of the city's best drummers. The ceremony started late, and I'd been getting very little sleep. After three hours of standing in a packed room, I was swooning with exhaustion. All I wanted was to return to my hotel. However, a voice in my head kept repeating, anxiously, to the beat of the drums: Stay here. You may not pass this way again.

That voice wasn't a wayward Santería spirit. It was me, the part of me—the part of all of us—that knows that travel, like life, is finite.

There is a reason why so many travel articles are headlined "Trips of a Lifetime." When we travel, we embark on an intense,

highly concentrated version of life itself; and as with life, we want to grab and hold on to as much of it as we can. While we can. So we give in to temptations.

On my travels, I become a human version of the banged-up suitcases you see tumbling down onto the baggage-claim belt, suitcases so full that they're held together with straps and duct tape. I'm overpacked with scents, sights, experiences. Yet I always find room for more.

Later in the afternoon, strolling around Buenos Aires, I reach into my bag for my cell phone—and come across the napkin with the address of Clarissa's ice-cream parlor discovery. My first impulse is to toss the napkin back in my bag, but then I don't. Yes, eating too many rich Argentine delicacies is making me feel guilty. But the thought of passing up a single one of travel's sweet moments fills me with an even more painful emotion: regret.

Temptation wins. I choose sweetness. I let my feet lead me to Clarissa's heladería—and its creamy, to-die-for dulce de leche-and-brownie ice cream. ■

Contributing editor DAISANN McLANE sheds light on local ways in her blog, www.therealtravelblog.com.

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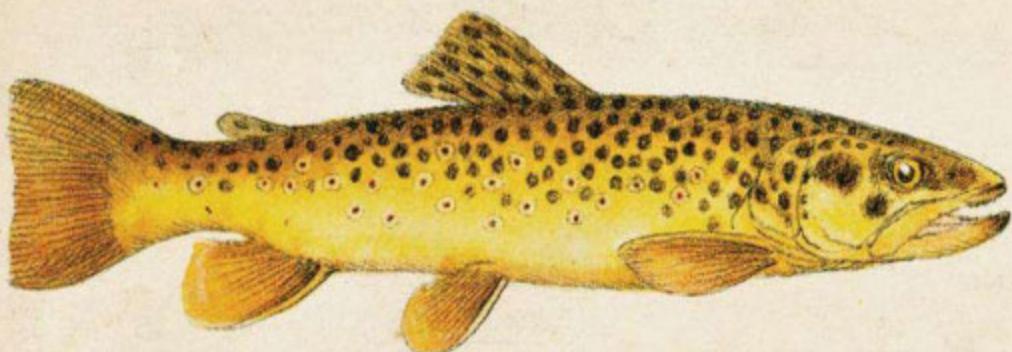


Fig. 1 Brown Trout

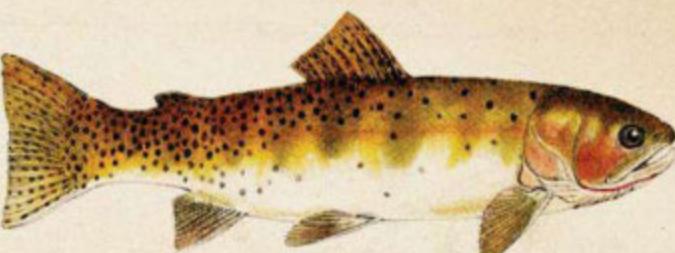


Fig. 4 Cutthroat Trout

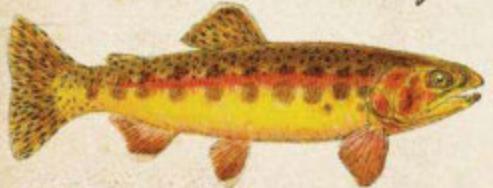


Fig. 2 Golden Trout



Fig. 3 Brook Trout

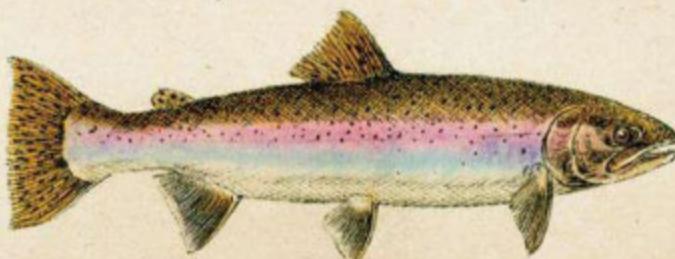


Fig. 5 Rainbow Trout

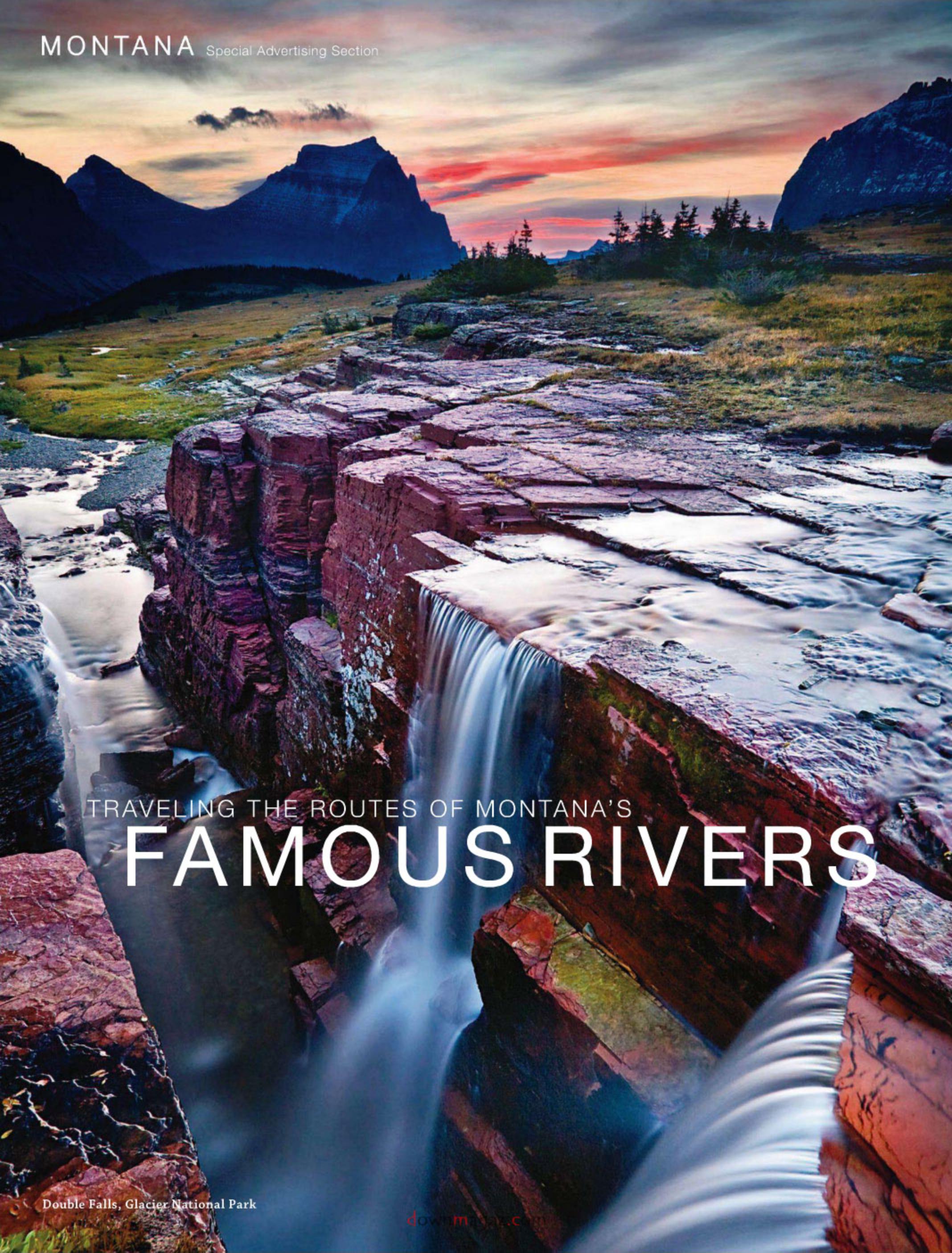
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TRAVELING THE ROUTES OF MONTANA'S
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Double Falls, Glacier National Park

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LEWIS AND CLARK DID IT BEFORE MONTANA WAS MONTANA.

Up the Missouri River they sailed, past the Great Falls, on to the headwaters at Three Forks and beyond, into the high peaks. On the return trip, in 1806, Clark and a small party paddled the Yellowstone River in two dugout cottonwood trees across southern Montana. The Corps of Discovery was followed by fur trappers and explorers like Jim Bridger and John Colter, who went with the flow through the vast wilderness. Steamboats plied the Missouri and Yellowstone, opening the frontier. And for millennia before Lewis and Clark, the rivers were home to winter camps, ceremonial dances, gatherings and battles, buffalo hunts and powwows. Today, the interstates and state highways hew to the same tradition.

Stitch together the great loop made by the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, taking side trips along the tributaries, and you cover the better part of the state. Include the Clark Fork, the Bitterroot, and the Flathead, west of the Continental Divide, and you take care of the rest. And if you fall prey to the worthy temptation of following side streams, you've got a life's worth of vacations ahead of you.



Yellowstone River, Paradise Valley, MT

GUIDED BY THE YELLOWSTONE

Start in the east, along the Yellowstone River. On the outskirts of Glendive, detour into Makoshika State Park, with trails, picnic stops, bird-watching, and scenic drives. Just north of town, along Highway 16, stop in at Intake Dam, where the ancient paddlefish collect each spring and where a major fish ramp project is underway to allow passage for warm water species that have been blocked from upstream waters for a century. Stop at local rock shops and museums featuring unique Yellowstone River "moss" agates.

Continue west through a string of towns named for military men of the Indian Wars—Terry, Forsyth, Custer, Miles City. The Yellowstone bends through the broad valley, past sandstone bluffs, offering fishing access and camping spots. Each town holds nuggets of history in small museums, the possibility of summer rodeos and small town cafés. Miles City is home to the annual Bucking Horse Sale, held every spring on the third weekend of May, when the town doubles in size,

crammed with cowboys, belt buckles the size of dessert plates, horse trailers, and the buzz of competition.

Stop at Pompeys Pillar National Monument, half an hour east of Billings, where William Clark paused in July of 1806. Walk to the top of the sandstone butte and take in the wide view, much as Clark did on his way back to St. Louis. Billings, Montana's largest city, where steamboats once docked up, is home to art museums, rodeos, a busy historic downtown, and amenities that run the gamut from luxury hotels and fine dining to scenic bicycle tours and riverside camping. Visit Pictograph Cave State Park, just southeast of town, to view ancient art and artifacts, some more than 2,100 years old.

Then, check out Columbus and schedule a day of exhilarating whitewater rafting on the Stillwater River, camp at the city park, and stroll the old Main Street. To the south loom the Beartooth Mountains, pillowowed with snow in the high country even in mid-summer.

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A photograph of a man wearing a red t-shirt, sunglasses, and a black cap, carrying a backpack. He is smiling at the camera.

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A photograph of a man wearing a white cowboy hat and a light-colored jacket with fringe, riding a tan horse. The horse is harnessed to a carriage or wagon.

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Laurel, Big Timber, the Crazy Mountains, the Boulder River—Montana unfurls in dramatic fashion on the way up the Yellowstone, full of potential for side jaunts, home-cooked meals, fishing stops, scenic floats, sheep drives, art festivals and farmer's markets. Take your time; give in to impulse. At Livingston, leave the interstate, explore a downtown dotted with art galleries, restaurants and shops, then head south towards Yellowstone National Park on Highway 89, following the upper Yellowstone River through Paradise Valley.

Enjoy a soak and a meal at Chico Hot Springs, stay at a bed and breakfast, indulge in a guided drift boat fishing

Return to Ennis and the Madison River, or drop down to Highway 41 at Twin Bridges, near the Jefferson River, completing the trio of watersheds that make up the Missouri. Stop in for a tour at Lewis and Clark Caverns along the Jefferson, and check out the community of Three Forks, home to the recently renovated Sacajawea Hotel and Wheat Montana. From there, Highway 287 follows the valley of the Missouri, full of Lewis and Clark sites and fishing accesses. At Helena, Montana's capital, take the Last Chance Tour Trolley through downtown, view the pottery and ceramic art at the Archie Bray Foundation or enjoy a hike up one of the trails in Mt. Helena Park.



Dearborn River, Rocky Mountain Front near Augusta

trip, rent a canoe. Follow the river all the way to Gardiner, where elk and bison roam on the lawns and whitewater outfitters will take you through the big water of Yankee Jim Canyon. Before heading back north, push on a bit further, into the park near Mammoth, to the parking lot at the 45th Parallel. A short trail leads to the Boiling River, where you can soak under an open sky in the hot geothermal waters while wildlife parades past.

MISSOURI RIVER MEANDER

Then, farther west, initiate the Missouri River exploration by heading up the Gallatin River, one of the three forks of the Missouri, along Highway 191 towards Big Sky. Raft the whitewater sections of the Gallatin, featuring the wet fun of the Mad Mile and House Rock. Dawdle in Big Sky Resort's Mountain Village, the base camp for Yellowstone, for mountain bike trails or the fast and furious triple Zipline Tour. Wind down the day by dining at Big Sky's family-friendly Whiskey Jack's. Farther south, drive the edge of Yellowstone National Park to West Yellowstone, one of Yellowstone's gateway communities, where wildlife parks, IMAX theaters, outfitters and lodging are all waiting.

Continue the headwaters theme by driving the Madison Valley on Highway 287, past Hebgen Lake, where the dramatic 1959 earthquake dammed the river. The Madison Valley teems with elk herds, broad vistas, ranch land and great fishing. From Ennis, a side trip to the former Territorial Capital of Virginia City treats you to a dose of Montana gold-rush, vigilante history and theater.

North of Helena, just off of Interstate 15, the dramatic Gates of the Mountains is worth a detour, and perhaps a boat tour. Lewis and Clark extolled the craggy beauty of this spot, also the site of the tragic Mann Gulch Fire, which killed 13 firefighters in August of 1949 and provided the material for Norman McLean's book, *Young Men and Fire*.

The scenery expands on the way to Great Falls. Tributaries like the Dearborn and Smith flow in to the Missouri, each with floating opportunities, fishing and backroads charm. Long swells of prairie, river canyons, distant buttes and mountain ranges rumple the view before Great Falls comes into focus.

In Great Falls, make time to tour the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, on the banks of the Missouri. Walk or bike the paved trails that wind through town and along the river. Don't leave before you walk through the C. M. Russell Museum, the world's most complete collection of Charlie Russell art and artifacts.

Just downstream of Great Falls, on Highway 87, the community of Fort Benton is steeped in river history. In the frontier decades, steamboats offloaded here onto wagons. "Wood hawks" and gold miners mingled on the banks, and commerce buzzed in this once thriving town, which still offers upscale hotels and restaurants. If a canoe trip is on the radar, contact an outfitter or rent canoes to float the Wild and Scenic Missouri River. The currents are mild, the scenery of White Cliffs and Hole in

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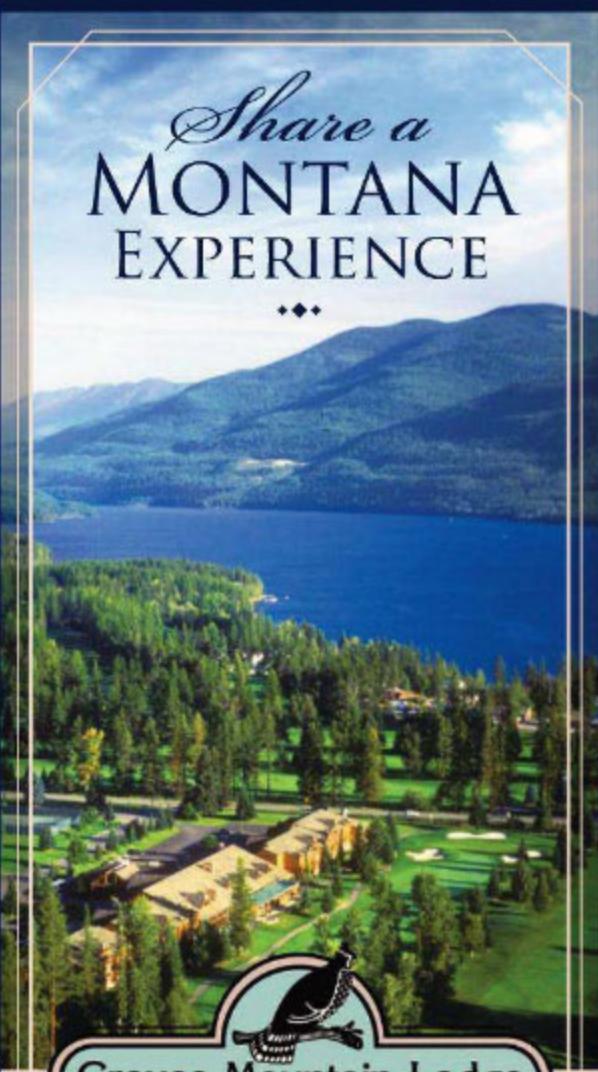


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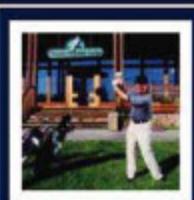
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Clark Fork, near Plains, MT

the Wall stunning, and the river corridor remains much as Lewis and Clark experienced it. In fact, you can camp in the same campsites they did on your way down to Judith Crossing or spend a week going all the way to Fred Robinson Bridge on Highway 191.

Strike north to Highway 2 and follow the Milk River across to Glasgow, where the road rejoins the Missouri River. Outside of Malta, visit the Great Plains Dinosaur Museum and Field Station, one of the stops along Montana's Dinosaur Trail. Drive the loop road through Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge for some great birding. In Glasgow, tour the nearby Fort Peck Dam and stop in at the local museum.

WATERS WEST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE
The Yellowstone and Missouri form a vast horseshoe of Montana experiences, but don't neglect the rivers west of the Continental Divide. Take the Clark Fork, for example, which runs through downtown Missoula within blocks of book stores, historic theaters, and the University of Montana campus. Some of the best whitewater in Montana lies in Alberton Gorge on the Clark Fork or on sections of the Blackfoot River, northeast of Missoula.

Follow Highway 93 south of Missoula, back into Lewis and Clark terrain along the Bitterroot Valley. Follow the Corps of Discovery expedition route up to Lolo Pass, enjoy a canoe float on the Bitterroot or stop in for a meal in Hamilton before an evening of theater, courtesy of The Hamilton Players.

Then again, turn north from Missoula on Highway 93 and head for the Flathead country. Keep an eye out for Indian fairs in St. Ignatius, stop off in Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge and the National Bison Range or find one of many

trails to hike into the Mission Mountains. Go for a sail on Flathead Lake, the largest natural body of fresh water in the western United States and enjoy mouth-watering cherries near Polson. Just to the north, Kalispell and Whitefish beckon.

Overnight at Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish, making sure to stroll Central Avenue, where the selection of coffee shops, stores and restaurants tempt you. Time your visit to coincide with the annual Huckleberry Days Arts Festival, held each August. Every summer on Tuesday evenings, the Whitefish Farmer's Market showcases local produce and crafts. Outside of town, take on the whitewater on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. Top it off with a drive up Glacier National Park's historic Going-to-the-Sun Highway, just down the road on Highway 2.

Pick up some good Montana reads, or listen to them as you drive:

- + *The Big Sky*, A.B. Guthrie
 - + *Undaunted Courage*, Stephen Ambrose
 - + *Winter Wheat*, Mildred Walker
 - + *This House of Sky*, Ivan Doig
 - + *A River Runs Through It*, Norman McLean
 - + *Bad Land*, Jonathan Raban
 - + *Fool's Crow*, James Welch
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Cities are the Key

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AUTHOR, professor, and urban theorist Richard Florida says society's success is inextricably bound to the success of our great cities. And yet, the growing concentration of wealth and human capital in urban areas is leading to greater inequality, with a person's prosperity determined increasingly by location. Florida explores social and economic trends in his numerous books, including the seminal *The Rise of the Creative Class*, published in 2002, and the more recent *Who's Your City? How the Creative Economy is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life*.

You've said the world is becoming "spikier" by the day.

What do you mean? I'm referring to how the world's centers of innovation and economic development are becoming much more concentrated. And as these spiky places, whether Silicon Valley or the Beijing-Shanghai mega-region or the Bangalore-Mumbai corridor in India, become more prosperous, they're becoming more economically and socially distant from the rest of their countries. So the world is getting spikier and also more unequal as a result.

Is the 21st century the century of the city? No doubt about that. In 2008, the world went urban—with more than half the population now living in urban centers. The world now turns on these great conglomerations of cities we called mega-regions, the Boston-New York-Washington corridor, the areas that stretch from Chicago to Detroit and Cleveland to Pittsburgh, Greater London, Greater Tokyo, the Brussels-Antwerp-Amsterdam corridor, and so on. These 40 mega-regions house less than 20 percent of the population but produce two-thirds of the Earth's economic output and nine in ten of our innovations. Cities are the key to all the grand challenges of the century. Economic prosperity comes from density. It comes from close interactions. It comes from people and firms clustering together to spur new innovation and to leverage each other's talents to create new technologies and new ways of doing business that will drive growth and raise living standards.

You spend a lot of time in Toronto and Miami. What do those two cities teach us? In many ways, Toronto is the model of a Frost Belt city. So many American

RICHARD FLORIDA
URBAN THEORIST

Richard Florida is the director of the Martin Prosperity Institute and a business professor at the University of Toronto. He also founded the Creative Class Group, a think tank based in Washington, D.C. He taught for 18 years at Carnegie Mellon University and has been a visiting professor at MIT and Harvard.

Frost Belt cities have been devastated by decline. For nearly 20 years in Pittsburgh, I watched that city brought to its knees before getting on the road to recovery. My wife is from Greater Detroit. I've seen the despair that hit that city and Cleveland. But Toronto has not only remade itself but has been able to thrive. Banks are regulated and stable. The housing market appreciates, as it always has, modestly. Most of all, Toronto maintains a functioning core. So many U.S. cities have what I call a barbell demography. On one end, they have young singles, gays and lesbians, couples with no kids, and on the other end they have a lot of empty nesters. But they don't have a lot of families with children in the center. Toronto, though, has less advantaged families, working families, middle-class families, and wealthy families living right in the city. It also has perhaps the largest population of foreign-born

people of any city in North America, showing us how to, almost marvelously, handle immigration and build what Canadians call a mosaic rather than a melting pot.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 30](#)



Woe of the business class: Florida travels the world but rarely has time to escape the hotel.



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—Sheila F. Buckmaster, National Geographic Society Contributing Editor



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The Case for Skipping Class

Schools need to ease up on family travel restrictions.

WHAT DO AMERICA'S SCHOOLS have against travel? ¶ In Darien, Connecticut, the public high schools' attendance policy warns: "Inexpensive airfares are not an excuse for extended student vacations." Fairfax County, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C., also discourages absences for family trips, and at least one of the county's high schools, Annandale, seems to have an outright travel ban. "Family trips and vacations will not be excused," states the posted attendance regulations. Notably, school-sponsored sporting

events are generally exempt.

Alright, I get it. Mom and Dad sipping piña coladas while Junior lands cannonballs in the resort pool on a school day—it's just wrong. I don't care how cheap the Priceline tickets to Cancún were. And this kind of truancy certainly won't help American students, already lagging behind their Chinese counterparts in math and science.

But some trips are worth skipping school for. What about the cruise to the Galápagos to witness evolutionary theory in action? Or a tour of Europe's castles to immerse the family in medieval history? That's not the same thing as hanging out at the beach, is it?

"Time in the field adds context, meaning, and challenge to the one-dimensional classroom feed," says Scott Pankratz of Ecology Project International, cultural exchange program. "Traveling is learning in a 3-D; it's an opportunity to grow and become what otherwise isn't possible."

Tell me about it. While my own spotty school attendance record may have affected my grades, it certainly didn't interfere with my education. In fact, my youthful travels across Europe and the United States with my parents, when I was supposed to be sitting in a classroom, inspired my career.

Educational travel may have other benefits, too. More than 88 percent of students who traveled before the age of 18 receive a college degree, according to a recent survey endorsed by the Student Youth & Travel Association. Slightly more than 8 in 10 had a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and more than 40 percent had GPAs of greater than 3.6. What's more, half of the respondents reported a household income of more than \$75,000 as adults. These correlations add up to some pretty intriguing math.

And yet many U.S. school systems are taking an increasingly



Field trip: Learning while traveling in Fuerteventura, Canary Islands.

While my own spotty attendance record may have affected my grades, it didn't interfere with my education.

hard line against pulling children out of school for learning trips, even as they forgive absences with questionable educational value, such as sports competitions. Junior can't be excused for traveling to the Grand Canyon to reinforce earth science lessons, but he can leave early with the rest of the football team for away games with the school's blessing? Puh-lease.

There's a reason schools are reluctant to issue waivers for educational travel. Rigid testing requirements under the ten-year-old No Child Left Behind Act,

which is meant to hold school districts accountable to national standards, have made schools mindful of every unexcused absence, according to Ezekiel Dixon-Román, an authority on international supplementary education and out-of-school learning. "What's being covered in school is specifically targeted at what the school is assessed on in the tests," he says. In other words, schools teach to the tests, and traveling kids may not be learning what they will be tested on.

I have a horse in this race. Three, actually—two sons and a daughter. Taking them out of school for educational travel involved negotiation and creativity, and we sometimes were made to feel as if we were depriving them of an education. By the time my older son started third grade, it was clear that the school calendar and school leave policy were too restrictive. Last January, we withdrew Aren from public school and enrolled him in an accredited homeschool program. His two younger siblings soon followed.

The solution isn't to push parents out but to reform schools. Real change must come from the top. "Federal policy around education should be changed," says Dixon-Román. "There's too much of a focus on testing and not enough on a rich and meaningful pedagogical experience."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

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To get an idea of how the system should work, consider what happened when Sonja Lother asked to take her daughter, Pippa, out of school for 12 days to visit Washington's Orcas Island last year. Yes, there was some red tape. She applied in writing for permission from the principal at Bluff Park Elementary School in Hoover, Alabama. Then she met with Pippa's teacher, Mrs. Evans, who asked Pippa to keep a travel journal. Finally the school green-lighted her request, classifying her trip as a pre-excused absence. Pippa's trip "expanded her thinking" and was worth the bureaucratic obstacles, says Lother. Pippa created a 28-page journal with daily entries and drawings of the islands, complete with postcards and other mementos, which she shared with her classmates, who learned something from the trip as well.

My kids already know that sometimes the best place to learn is outside the classroom. They'll never forget standing on the edge of Kilauea, on Hawaii's Big Island, inhaling the sulfuric air, and listening to a park ranger tell them the secrets of a volcano. Or the fascinating story of northwest Florida's rare sand dune lakes, formed by a combination of tidal flows and weather, presented by a nature guide named

Snookie as they walked along a narrow, sandy trail. They know there's no substitute for being there.

Hey parents, this is an issue worth getting pushy over (unlike the B+ that should have been an A on Junior's last history test). You're most likely to be successful if you can first work with a teacher to ensure your child will keep up with the schoolwork before approaching the school administration.

Skipping class to travel isn't something all families can afford, unfortunately, but it may be more affordable than you think. Remember, not every trip has to—or should—include a five-star resort. When I was young, my family crisscrossed two continents on a shoestring budget, often staying with friends or camping. (For truly needy students, groups such as the SYTA Youth Foundation and ACIS offer scholarships for organized travel.)

Travel shouldn't be an option for only the elite; it should be an opportunity available to any student or family who wishes to expand their horizons. Schools shouldn't get in the way of a good education. ■

Contributing editor CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT also addresses readers' travel problems. E-mail him your story at celliott@ngs.org.

ONE ON ONE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

And what about Miami? It's a classic comeback city. Once plagued by crime and all sorts of dysfunction, and recently devastated by the real estate bust, it has made a fairly broad rebound. The Southern Florida mega-region, which also includes Tampa and Orlando, is quite an economic powerhouse with a strong future because of its international ties. The United States has the Atlantic economy facing Europe and the Pacific economy with Los Angeles and Seattle and San Francisco facing Asia. Now Miami gives the country a third face looking toward the rising economies of Latin America.

What role does sense of community play?

It's becoming much more important, especially because so many of us live alone or have to move far away from family and childhood friends. That sense of community becomes our anchor. I'm very drawn to places that have this distinctive sense of self, a distinctive soul. One of our biggest challenges is how to remake our suburbs, which tend to be generic. How do we create character? How do we make them more livable and purposeful?

What's going to happen to destinations we cherish for their sense of place? I think back to my parents' or grandparents' generations. When they traveled or moved from the U.S. to Europe: Poland, Paris, or London—never mind Asia or Africa—they had a completely different experience from being at home. There were completely different places to stay, different foods, different fashions, not to mention different languages. Now I'm struck by the degree to which our world has become homogenous. Whether we're in France, the United States, China, or Japan, we tend to eat the same foods, wear the same clothes, drive the same cars. But then simultaneously, people are trying to find what's unique and authentic in the world, and that interest makes those things rise in value. In some ways, capitalism is wrapping its arms around a place's sense of history and authenticity, viewing them as economic assets, a storehouse of value and profits. And yet, popularity threatens those assets. Coming to grips with that contradiction is an important challenge, because once that history and authenticity are eradicated, they're impossible to get back. ■

KEITH BELLOWS is the editor of *Traveler*.

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The green giants come to life and walk on their own roots

Legend has it that the towering trees in the Peruvian rainforest come to life like green giants, moving at their own will like jealous guardians, deciding who is granted access to land's hidden wonders and amazing beauty.

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Viva Green Vegas

A casino giant rolls the dice on responsible glitz.

AFTER SPENDING a decade searching out the world's most innovative sustainable tourism projects, I would have bet my last dollar that this road would never lead to Las Vegas, where "alternative energy" is more apt to be the name for the newest cocktail rather than a conservation strategy. Yet here I am on the Strip, staring at neon lights turning the night into day and passing billboards for million-dollar jackpots and a Lady Gaga concert. I'm headed to CityCenter, a new resort complex whose six U.S. Green

Building Council LEED certifications make it the single largest concentration of eco-rated buildings in North America.

"Massive," is my first thought as I enter the expansive lobby of Aria—CityCenter's 4,004-room flagship hotel. It houses a river—84 feet long, Maya Lin-designed, and made entirely from recycled silver—that is part of a multimillion-dollar art collection. CityCenter encompasses three other hotels besides Aria, connected to an indoor shopping area nearly the size of two Manhattan city blocks, along with 2,400 private residences and more than five football fields' worth of convention space. Can something of this size—and the attendant hordes of conventioners—possibly tread lightly on the planet?

That a gambling corporation—MGM Resorts International—is behind this cutting-edge development makes me even more skeptical. The son of a blackjack dealer, I learned early that the kind of green Vegas is committed to is cold, hard cash.

Yet the staggering investment to build this place—8.5 billion dollars, making it the single largest private construction project in U.S. history—has afforded features to make any eco-techie drool, in a top to bottom approach that is among the most impressive I have come across. In addition to using nontoxic paints, sealants, and adhesives, builders recycled 95 percent of construction debris, keeping thousands of tons of steel, concrete, paper, and plastic out of Nevada's landfills. In a region where the water table is dropping, water conservation technology saves some 50 million gallons a year. All of this—and more—leaves me wondering if Vegas, after decades of unflinching waste and extravagance, has finally entered rehab.

"Las Vegas can be a leading green destination," insists James



Green giant: The new, massive CityCenter complex in Las Vegas.

The resort's space-age technology is a harbinger of what we might one day find in even run-of-the-mill interstate motels.

Murren, MGM's chairman and CEO. "Designing CityCenter was about creating a healthier environment for our guests, for the planet, and for the 12,000 people who work here. And, yes, about bringing in the money, too."

Despite cost overruns said to approach \$380 million that nearly derailed the project, Murren maintains that the enterprise is viable. When I point out crowds of stylish twentysomethings filling the bars, shops, and restaurants, he adds, "That's one of our target audiences. Members of the so-called millennial generation are

more environmentally aware; they look for organic menus, embrace the latest technology, and like to party. Our goal is to bring them in now and keep them coming back."

Setting aside for a moment what sounds like a creative strategy to seduce a new generation to gambling, Murren may be onto something. According to a *Time* magazine poll, nearly 50 percent of Americans surveyed said protecting the environment should be a priority, and a study by the financial consulting firm Accenture found that Forbes Global 1000 companies that ranked highest in sustainable practices also outperformed their competition in shareholder profits.

For MGM, going green might deliver the real jackpot.

After exploring CityCenter's 67 acres of futuristic-looking curved glass and angled steel by bike (courtesy of their bicycle valet service), I cruise back to Aria feeling like George Jetson re-entering my space-age home. Smart controls that monitor energy use recognize me when I first step into my room and then "remember" me when I return, cueing my favorite song and soft lighting as soon as I open the door. Behind the scenes, a natural gas cogeneration electricity plant—the first on the Strip—reduces emissions and uses waste heat to provide hot water, while in the

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public areas, an advanced floor-based air-conditioning system avoids wasting energy on cooling empty spaces near the ceilings. Other than some billionaire private homes, Aria may be the first resort to offer this space-age technology to guests, a harbinger of what we might one day find even in run-of-the-mill interstate motels.

But there's something vaguely disturbing in all this green grandness. Like the rest of Vegas, CityCenter is a "Big Gulp" version of reality, from soaring lobbies to cavernous casinos. With 61 floors, Aria alone has a huge environmental footprint. This pushes up against a growing argument, led by urban preservationists, that recycling (i.e., renovating) old buildings, rather than putting up new ones, should be the priority if green is really the goal.

"A sustainably designed project of CityCenter's size and magnitude is certainly commendable," Thierry Roch, executive director of Historic Hotels of America, tells me over the phone. "However, renovating existing buildings is a much better way to save natural resources and have less of a negative impact on the environment."

Indeed, he cites the Skirvin Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City. Originally built in 1911, it languished for nearly two decades, boarded up. When it was renovated

instead of being demolished, not only was the city's historical character preserved, but costs were lower.

Still, expecting companies to stop putting up new buildings is unrealistic. And other sustainability experts argue that if a global green economy is really going to take root, sustainable practices must be used on the full spectrum of construction, from small eco-lodges to large-scale urban developments. Because of CityCenter's size, huge construction firms that worked on the project were introduced to environmentally friendly building techniques, resulting in an increase in the number of green building suppliers.

In true Vegas fashion, MGM has gambled on the biggest, glitziest, and most ambitious eco-debut of any major travel destination in the world. Although the lessons are still to come, CityCenter might well prove to be the tipping point when "green" hotels move from niche to mainstream. Has Sin City turned penitent? Not quite, or at least not yet. But the environmental movement has now arrived in the unlikeliest of places. ■

Editor at large COSTAS CHRIST writes about sustainability and tourism issues. E-mail your comments to Travel_Talk@ngs.org.

Utah

Family Fun for Everyone



Utah Shakespeare Festival, Cedar City



Virgin River Narrows, Zion National Park



Quarry Visitor Center at Dinosaur National Monument



Slickrock Trail, Moab

Utah's diversity of landscapes and attractions makes it the ideal family vacation destination. Whether you seek desert solitude or high-altitude exhilaration, a peaceful backcountry hike, dinosaur discovery, mountain biking, or American Indian exploration, Utah offers 80,000 square miles of possibilities.

Home to Zion, Bryce Canyon, Arches, Canyonlands, and Capitol Reef National Parks, Utah offers unique beauty and an abundance of recreational opportunities. Plus, many of Utah's 43 State Parks, seven national monuments, and five national recreation areas rival national parks for scenic adventure.

This fall two new natural history destinations will open for families to explore Utah's exciting prehistoric past. The Utah Museum of Natural History (umnh.utah.edu) and the new Quarry Visitor Center at Dinosaur National Monument (nps.gov/dino) will captivate visitors with exhibits that highlight the dinosaurs, geology, and anthropology that set this state apart.

Utah's culture and arts are fascinating as well. The state is a treasure trove of historic sites and artifacts, some important to the Native American tribes of the region; others to the Mormons, whose pioneer ancestors helped to colonize the state. Utah also offers a rich array of festivals. Make sure to add Utah's Tony Award-winning Shakespeare Festival in Cedar City—celebrating its 50th season this year—to your national parks itinerary.

From picturesque campgrounds to rustic cabins to world-class luxury hotels, you will find Utah's accommodations welcoming. During your stay, take time to experience the award-winning dining that awaits—everything from a destination brewpub to five-star cuisine.

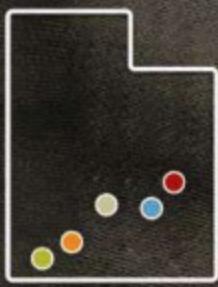
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SMART TRAVELER

[TRAVEL AT ITS BEST]

Adventures in Coupon Travel

Websites such as Groupon and LivingSocial brought us localized deals on cupcakes and haircuts. But can they deliver travel discounts?

To find out, writer **Janelle Nanos** planned a weekend getaway in San Francisco.



REBECCA HALE/NGS (UPPER); RENAUD VISAGE/PHOTOLIBRARY (LOWER)

Québec



Bonaventure Island and Percé Rock National Park
© Jean-Pierre Huard/Sépaq

MEET THE UNEXPECTED...

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Unless you've been in digital isolation for the past two years, you've no doubt heard about, and maybe even purchased, coupons from one of the so-called social buying sites such as Groupon and LivingSocial.

These sites have come to redefine the commercial marketplace. The business model is relatively simple: Participants sign up online to receive daily deals (half-price is common) on everything from meals to massages.

Those who decide to purchase the deal can either print out a prepaid coupon or show their smart phone screens at the retailer to receive their discount. Sharing the deal with friends through social networking earns you rewards. Buyers save money, businesses gain exposure and new customers, and deal sites get a hefty cut.

The concept has taken off, despite, or perhaps because of, the recent economic downturn, which has transformed people from nearly every strata of society into bargain hunters. Groupon, the first and biggest of these, has grown to over 50 million subscribers

Many social buying sites offer deals on hotels, museum passes, and tours.

in hundreds of cities since its 2008 launch. It has sold more than 42 million deals, attracted (and rejected) potential buyers such as Google, and ostensibly saved consumers worldwide \$1.8 billion. LivingSocial—flush from an influx of \$175 million from online retailer Amazon—is close on Groupon's heels. Smaller, regional, and niche deal sites have also jumped on the social-buying bandwagon, targeting parents, outdoor enthusiasts, fashionistas, and travelers.

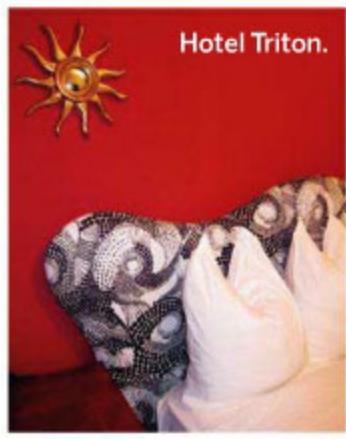
SneakAway, Vacationist, and TripAlertz all launched in 2010, and Jetsetter, which was one of the first to offer travel deals, recently began offering a larger number of "24/7" deals in addition to their short-lived, deeply discounted "flash" sales on boutique properties. The established deal sites report that their customers have become so accustomed to buying deals that they now incorporate the sites into their trip planning and are increasingly making purchases outside of their own cities. LivingSocial launched discounted weekend Escapes (prepackaged hotel stays) and Adventures (theme events) for its members. And Groupon recently began recasting itself not only as a deal site but a "city guide" and a "perfect tool for travelers."

To see whether I could save money without scrimping on fun, food, and activities, I planned a weekend trip to San Francisco—one of the country's most expensive cities. I used online coupons for everything I could, from transportation to hotel rooms, meals to entertainment.

A Weekend of Dealmaking in San Francisco

Arriving in Style

With husband in tow, I landed at SFO around midnight—two hours after our scheduled arrival. Would my first deal—a limo ride from the airport to the hotel—be a no-show? A minute later, the driver found us and quickly whisked our bags into the Town Car. We sipped complimentary V8s in the backseat, basking in the lights of the Bay Bridge. **Paid:** \$30 (half off) through **LivingSocial**.



Cheap Sleep

I wanted a hotel in a central location without sacrificing style, so I booked a stay at the **Hotel Triton** just off Union Square. Among the perks: free Wi-Fi, Pee-Wee's

Playhouse-style furniture, and a complimentary happy hour in the lobby. **Paid:** \$148 per night (half off) through **Jetsetter**.

Farm-Fresh Eats

Some Ferry Building market

vendors offer free samples on weekends. Appetites sufficiently primed, we found **Cowgirl Creamery's Sidekick**, a new sandwich and milk bar. Two breakfast sandwiches were served on fresh rolls and accompanied by steamed raspberry milk. **Paid:** \$12 (30 percent off) through **BlackboardEats**.

Polk Street Shopping

The Scoutmob site offered plenty of deals on bucolic Russian Hill. My first stop: **Picnic**, a whimsical boutique offering 50 percent off purchases if I pulled up the code on my phone. I bought a vintage-inspired California tablecloth as a souvenir. "Far better than a T-shirt in

Fisherman's Wharf," owner Pei Sze Ng said approvingly. I spent the rest of the afternoon browsing site-approved retailers before stopping at **Loving Cup** for a cup of pecan praline pudding, a hot apple cider, and an espresso. **Paid:** \$13 for tablecloth; \$4.50 for snack (both half off) purchased through **Scoutmob**.

Big Breakfast

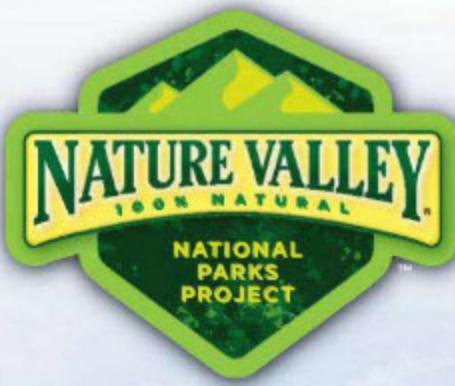
Mel's Diner is a San Francisco institution that takes its classic doo-wop sensibilities seriously. My coupon (conveniently displayed on my phone) bought us two massive omelets, coffee, and fresh-squeezed orange juice. We tossed in a few



bucks as a tip. **Paid:** \$10 (for \$20 worth of food) through **Groupon**.

Biking the Bridge

With a coupon for **Blazing Saddles** bike rentals, we departed from Union Square and biked through the Tenderloin and the Haight before cruising into Golden Gate Park (and its car-free pathways). Heading north through the Presidio, we



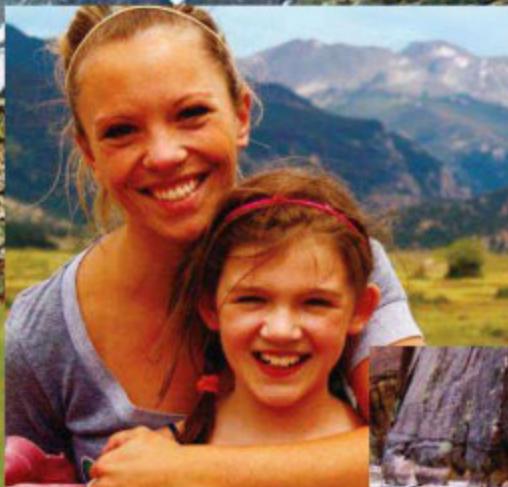
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crossed over the Golden Gate Bridge with the wind at our backs before coasting down to Sausalito. **Paid:** \$30 (for \$60 worth of rentals) through **Groupon**.

Fancy Dinner

Luce, a sleek outpost with a Michelin star located in the InterContinental hotel in SoMa, would normally be out of my price range. But I had a coupon. My party of four eagerly tucked into lamb, sweetbreads, pork cheeks, foie gras, guinea hen, and beef tenderloin. **Paid:** \$182 (a 30 percent discount) through **BlackboardEats**.

A Taste of the Mission

Bridging a gap between Hispanic and hipster, the Mission has some of the city's best—and cheapest—food. I booked a group walking tour through its kitchens. The four-hour tour had me sampling bacon-glazed donuts, tacos *al pastor*, bourbon-spiked ice cream, cinnamon horchata cupcakes, and spaghetti (squash) and meatball pie. Stuffed doesn't even come close. **Paid:** \$45 (for a tour with **Edible Excursions**, discounted from \$75) through **Goldstar**.

Geek Squad

Before heading out to the **California Academy of Sciences**, the science museum in Golden Gate Park, I did an online search and turned up a coupon code for 20 percent off tickets. We spent an afternoon tunneling under giant Amazon fish tanks, watching skittish African penguins, and meeting the museum's unofficial mascot: an albino alligator named Claude. **Paid:** \$48 (for two tickets, a savings of \$12) through **RetailMeNot**.

Free is Better

When I heard about **Pier 24**, a new space that exhibits private collections of contemporary American photography, I knew we had to go. The catch: The number of visitors is limited to 20 at a time through an online registration. This is where advance planning pays. In the massive gallery, we viewed the works of Diane Arbus, William Eggleston, Walker Evans, and Lee Friedlander. **Paid:** nothing (book tickets online) at www.pier24.org.

Not Just For Kids

The kid in me jumped for joy when I saw tickets on a family-centric deal site for the **Contemporary Jewish Museum's "Curious George Saves the Day" exhibit**. The



Pier 24.



Food tour.



Polk Street shop.



Contemporary Jewish Museum.



Snack stop.



Street art.



California Academy of Sciences.

authors of the classic children's books fled Paris with their sketches before the Nazi occupation and traveled by bicycle, train, and boat to Lisbon and Rio before settling in New York. When I shared my purchase on Twitter (using the special link the site gave me), several people used my link to purchase their tickets, which earned me a \$10 credit. **Paid:** \$10 (for two tickets) through **Mamapedia**.

A Toast to Frugality

Over the course of several days, I tallied about \$900 in savings. Of course, we would likely not have eaten at the places we did or taken a limo from the airport if we didn't have the discounts. So my extreme couponing helped me make our money go farther rather than to spend less. To celebrate, I pulled up the **FindMeSpecials** app on my phone and found a happy hour at **Puccini & Pinetti**, where my husband and I toasted each other with glasses of white wine. **Paid:** \$3 per glass through **FindMeSpecials**.

CLICK & SAVE

Websites I used to plan my trip.

Groupon.com The site that launched the trend is now in 45 countries.

LivingSocial.com The other big player recently debuted weekend travel packages and instant local deals.

Jetsetter.com Offers discounts on boutique hotels.

Goldstar.com Reduced prices on theater tickets, sporting events, and more.

Bloomspot.com Curates higher-end deals on hotels, restaurants, and boutiques.

Zozi.com A source for outdoor activities like kayaking.

TripAlertz.com Discounts on hotels and tour packages.

BlackboardEats.com Hand-picked restaurant deals. \$1 for 30 percent discount coupons. In NYC, LA, and SF.

Scoutmob.com Website and GPS-enabled mobile app that offers discounted coupons for restaurants and shops.

SneakerAway.com Luxury hotel packages at lower rates.

Mamapedia.com Family-friendly deals.

RetailMeNot.com Offers coupon codes. Try it when you are looking for a discount to a specific place.

FindMeSpecials A mobile app that locates happy hour specials nearby. —J.N.

LESSONS

START EARLY

Sign up and browse deal sites for your destination a few weeks before your departure.

AGGREGATE

There are so many deal sites that it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Visit aggregator sites such as Yipit that collect the daily deals from multiple websites and let you know when deals expire.

READ THE FINE PRINT

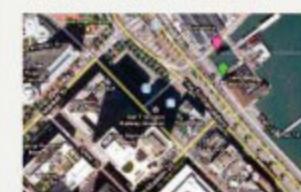
Some restaurant coupons can't be used on Fridays or Saturdays. Some may not be good for all mealtimes. (I had already ordered my lunch at one restaurant when I realized that my coupon was only accepted at dinner.)

FIND A BALANCE

Don't purchase too many prepaid coupons. It might rain, or your plans could change. Coupon sites such as BlackboardEats, Scoutmob, and DealHood let you register for coupon codes without paying full price up front.

MAP IT OUT

To keep my deals organized, I plotted every purchase I made on a Google Map, which helped me create a schedule for the week-



end based on when good deals overlapped (boutique shopping and a great lunch, for example).

BRING A FRIEND

It's hard to eat \$50 worth of tacos on your own; most deals work best if you have a companion.

USE IT, DON'T LOSE IT

Didn't get to use all your prepaid coupons by trip's end? Websites such as Lifesta have cropped up as a place to resell unused coupons. Another good option: Craigslist. —J.N.

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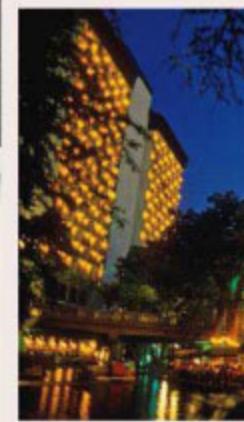
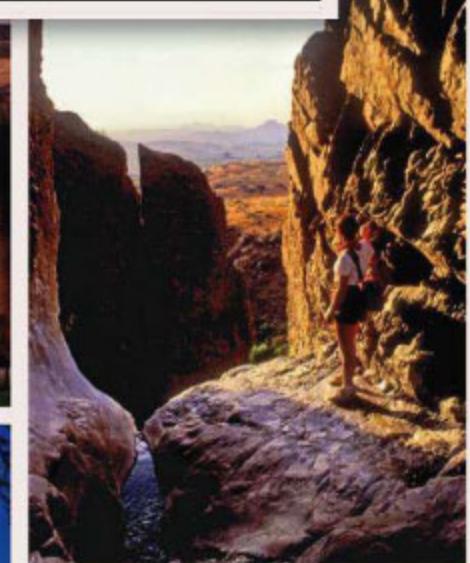
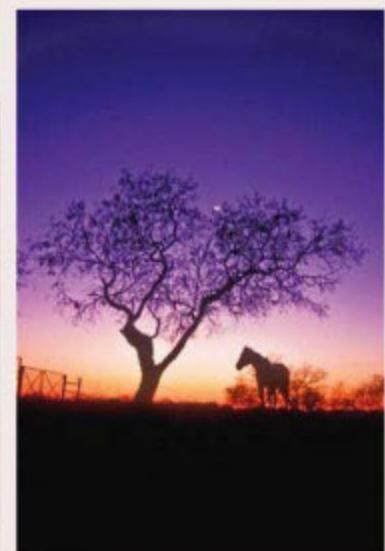
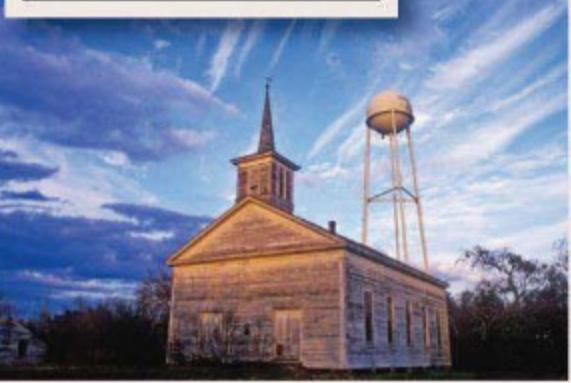
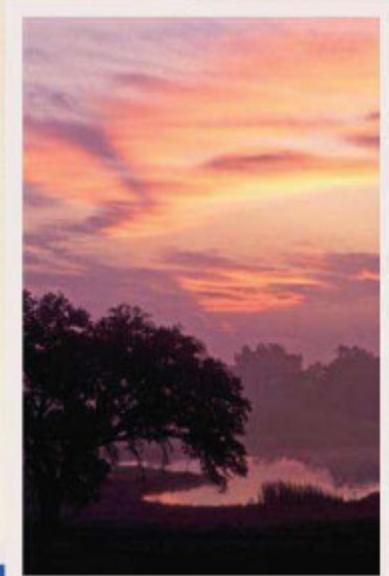
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True Texas



Tips from a National Geographic
photographer who calls Texas home.



Photo by Kirk Tuck

Will van Overbeek is a contributing photographer to *National Geographic Traveler* and dozens of other publications worldwide.

"I travel on assignment all over the world, but since I was 12, Texas has been home. It has this rare authenticity—Texans don't borrow their way of life from anyplace else or look elsewhere for inspiration—they are completely genuine. They've created their own culture right out of the frontier and take intense pride in the fact that everything is homegrown. That's what makes it such a unique place to explore—my personal favorites go on and on:

- ★ Kayaking or floating down crystal clear rivers in the Hill Country
- ★ Rodeos like the XIT in Dalhart that retain true cowboy character
- ★ Wildflower season in the spring when huge expanses of color blanket the land
- ★ Rural barbecue hideaways in Lockhart, Taylor, and Llano that inspire pilgrimages
- ★ Mountain biking and hiking in state parks like Palo Duro Canyon
- ★ Gulf oysters fresh out of Galveston Bay, Mexican food El Paso-style, and Houston's fantastic Asian cuisine (one of the largest Asian-American populations away from the East and West Coasts)
- ★ Amarillo's iconic Cadillac Ranch where you can add graffiti to half-buried cars—the state's quirky art scene at its best
- ★ Bird-watching in wild, unspoiled spots like Padre Island National Seashore and Big Thicket National Preserve
- ★ World-class art museums in Houston; world-class shopping in Dallas

Texans are incredibly open, friendly, and generous; you can strike up conversations with strangers in the most unlikely places. This state—and these people—are the real deal."



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TOP FIVE

Great Golf Settings

Where the view matters as much as the game. | By SHIVANI VORA

Golf has an aesthetic many sports don't: Players swing on courses boasting rolling fairways and duck-dotted ponds. (Compare that to tennis, often played on a concrete court painted with white lines.) Add a spectacular setting, and you've got holes worth traveling for, whether you're a duffer, scratch player, or golf spouse.

1 CAPE KIDNAPPERS, NEW ZEALAND > The course on the North Island was built on an uninhabited coastal bluff 460 feet above the Pacific Ocean. On the 15th hole, golfers swing directly toward the sea. And, since a large gannet colony is nearby, flocks flying overhead are par for the course.

2 CLUB AT NINE BRIDGES, SOUTH KOREA > Its setting is dramatic: 6,000-foot Mount Halla, a dormant volcano on Jeju island. The first nine holes are laced with gurgling creeks, and the back nine feature a meadow visited by deer.

3 MAKAI GOLF COURSE, HAWAII > With commanding ocean vistas visible from many of the holes, Makai, on the North Shore of Kauai, also offers unobstructed views of the mountains, the surfer-rich Hanalei Bay, a tropical rain forest, and the deep-green sea.

4 ROYAL COUNTY DOWN, IRELAND > The ninth hole at this course in Northern Ireland is one of the world's most scenic. Golfers work their way past towering peaks, the fierce Irish Sea, and 200-foot-tall sand dunes. The entire round is challenging, but number nine is notorious: Players have to hit over a dune that faces the mountains to an unseen fairway.

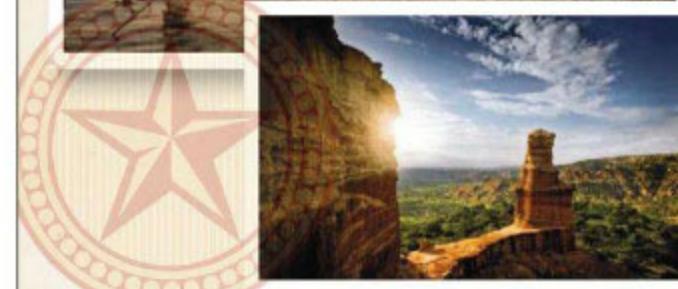
5 ASKERNISH, SCOTLAND > One of the most remote and natural courses uses the contours of sand dunes to form the fairways. No artificial fertilizers or chemicals pollute the lawns often speckled with sheep. Players are flanked by sand dunes that turn deep orange and pink at sunset.



The greens and the blue: Cape Kidnappers course in New Zealand hugs the Pacific Ocean.

World's First

In Scotland, golf was outlawed in the 15th century because it supposedly distracted young Scots from learning archery, a key skill for national defense. England had no such compunctions, and the world's first golf course, Royal Black Heath (www.royalblackheath.com) was established in 1608. It remains open, just outside London, today.



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Sea Life: The Oceanographic Museum presents a variety of marine-themed exhibits.

48 HOURS

Monaco Within Reach

You don't have to be royalty or a high roller to enjoy this Mediterranean playground. | **By KIMBERLEY LOVATO**

THIS SUMMER a prince will marry his commoner sweetheart in an historic setting amid royal pomp and public celebration. No, we're not talking about Britain's Prince William and Kate Middleton but Prince Albert II of Monaco and South African Olympic swimmer Charlene Wittstock. On July 2, they will exchange vows in the royal courtyard of the Prince's Palace at the most anticipated wedding in the Principality of Monaco since the prince's late parents, American actress Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier III, married here 55 years ago.

"The streets will be decorated with red and white ribbons and flags, and bells will be heard ringing from the churches," says Maguy Maccario, consul general of

Monaco and vice president of the Prince Albert II Foundation-USA.

With Friday, July 1, and Saturday, July 2, declared holidays and big-screen televisions set up to allow spectators to witness the nuptials, Monaco is poised to party. But royal revelry is just one reason to visit. While it may be known for its high-roller and haute-couture crowd, Monaco also offers diverse cultural events, appealing public parks and historic sites, and a contagious joie de vivre.

WHAT TO DO Roughly three miles long and a little over a half-mile wide, Monaco, a sovereign state on the Mediterranean coast, is eminently walkable. Most tourist attractions cluster in Monaco-Ville, the old city near the Prince's Palace, and the

wealthy Monte Carlo area around the Casino and beaches. Head to La Condamine, behind the port, and Fontvieille (see "On Foot" sidebar), west of Monaco-Ville, for peeks into local life. The public bus makes stops in every quarter and is an efficient, pleasant way to tour and a steal at a euro a ride.

In a prime location along the waterfront, the **Grimaldi Forum**, Monaco's main event space, hosts an exhibition July 11 to September 12 of portraits, sculptures, court costumes, jewelry, and other artifacts culled from Europe's royal dynasties. "This is a priceless collection that provides a rare glimpse into the lives of history's most powerful monarchs with special focus on legendary sovereign couples," says Maccario.

Inspired by Princess Grace, the neighboring **Japanese Garden**—a haven of trimmed trees, arched bridges, and water features—was inaugurated in 1994 by Prince Rainier III.

Entry into the storied **Casino** requires ten euros (\$13.90), a passport check (Monaco citizens are forbidden to enter



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Yachts dock alongside the Port Palace Hotel, which also boasts a Michelin-starred restaurant.

the gaming rooms), and a jacket for men. The place may look familiar to James Bond film fans; the Casino had starring roles in *Never Say Never Again* and *GoldenEye*. Note the eight Bohemian crystal chandeliers and the art-laden walls of Le Salon de l'Europe, the Casino's first gaming room, opened in 1865. Not a high roller? Access to the Casino's atrium is free and there are lots of one-euro slots.

Bargain is a word rarely uttered here, but that doesn't mean there aren't any. Provision a picnic at the daily open-air **Condamine Market** on Place d'Armes, near the pedestrian-only shopping street Rue de la Princesse Caroline. Locals have been coming to the market since 1880 to buy bread, wine, fruit, and cheese.

Champagne may be Monaco's elixir of choice, but the local beer is worth a try. Founded in 1905, the **Brasserie de Monaco**

shut down for over 30 years before being resurrected in 2008 at the encouragement of Prince Albert II. Reserve ahead for a brewery tour and souvenir glass (\$18).

Rising 200 feet above the sea and jutting between Port Hercule and Fontvieille is the Rock, crowned by Monaco-Ville and the **Prince's Palace**. The Grimaldi family have ruled from this fortress since François Grimaldi, disguised as a monk, captured it in 1297. Watch the changing of the guard each morning at 11:55 and from June to October tour the royal courtyard as well as several interior state rooms. The Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra performs during July and August evenings in the courtyard of the palace. Coveted tickets go on sale in early June (\$25-\$115).

The narrow streets of Monaco-Ville amble toward the **Cathedral of Monaco**,

celebrating its 100th year this summer. Princess Grace and Prince Rainier III wed here and are now interred behind the altar alongside other Monégasque sovereigns.

The site of their son's wedding dinner and ball is the grandiose **Oceanographic Museum**, built over a hundred years ago by Prince Albert I and home to a broad range of marine curiosities, including a reassembled skeleton of a baleen whale and an aquarium with 90 tanks filled with 4,000 fish. The rooftop terrace boasts a photo-worthy view.

WHERE TO EAT Monaco's restaurant scene is rife with big-name chefs and boasts an impressive eight Michelin stars. Dinner



[ON FOOT]

A WALK IN FONTVIEILLE

Escape Monte Carlo's bustle in this quieter neighborhood.

This annexed hundred-acre land west of the Rock was reclaimed from the sea during the 1970s and



today harbors one of Monaco's most treasured gardens, a rare car collection, and a restaurant-lined port that's more low-key hangout than hip.

❶ H.S.H. THE PRINCE OF MONACO'S VINTAGE CAR COLLECTION

Car buffs drool over this collection of vintage and rare automobiles, including the Rolls-Royce Princess Grace used on her wedding day. Breezy posters (above) capture a golden age of motoring.

❷ PRINCESS GRACE ROSE GARDEN

This peaceful green spot tucked into Fontvieille Park is scented with over 4,000 rosebushes.

❸ COLUMBUS BRASSERIE

For more than just a croissant to start the day, head to this popular breakfast spot for eggs Benedict (\$11) or a full breakfast of eggs, sausage, tomatoes, and toast (\$13.50).

❹ FONTVIEILLE FLEA MARKET

Juxtaposed against Monaco's luxe boutiques, this small Saturday morning market of old books, cutlery, and knick-knacks is fun to sift through before settling into one of the busy cafés along Fontvieille's port.

❺ THE SCULPTURE PATH

The curvy pedestrian lanes of Fontvieille Park reveal about a hundred sculptures from contemporary international artists such as Fernando Botero.

❻ LOUIS II STADIUM

The 18,000-seat stadium is home to the AS Monaco soccer team, but underground sprawls a vast sporting complex, including an Olympic-size freshwater heated pool that's open to the public and used for international competitions.



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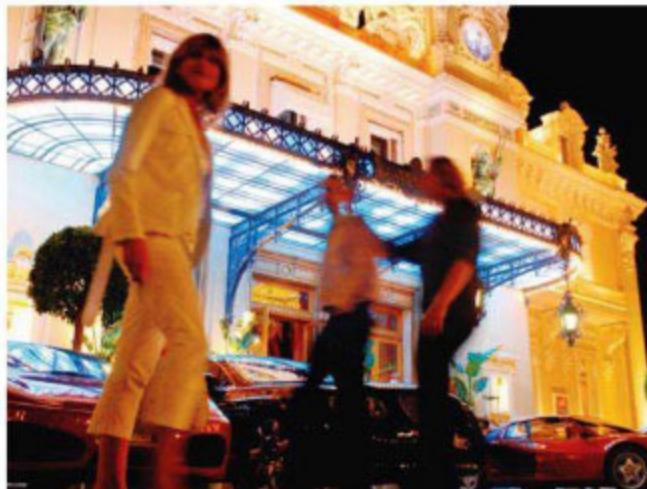


can be budget-savaging, but prix-fixe lunch menus dish up starry cuisine at affordable prices. French super-chef Joël Robuchon's Japanese restaurant **Yoshi** inside the tony Hotel Metropole earned Monaco its latest Michelin star. Go for traditional sushi and sashimi and sip sake or tea in the interior Japanese garden. The lunch menu is \$40 for three courses.

On a neighborhood street above Monte Carlo, **Polpetta** (2 Rue Paradis) is a local favorite. "I go there every time I return to Monaco," says Maccario. "I love their handmade pasta and fresh fish prepared tableside."

Just steps from the palace on a narrow street of Monaco-Ville, the family-run **U Cavagnetu** (14 Rue Comte Félix Gastaldi) has been serving traditional Monégasque cuisine, which is influenced by nearby Italy and Provence, for 40 years. Try steamed salmon with dill sauce or *pissaladière*, a tomato-less pizza topped with onions, anchovies, olives, and garlic.

WHERE TO STAY Low-budget hotels and B&Bs don't exist in Monaco, and many people opt to overnight more cheaply in nearby Beausoleil or Cap d'Ail, but guests need not sacrifice college tuition to spend a night in town. A Michelin-starred restaurant, harbor views, and a 20,000-bottle wine cellar cobbled into the cliff wall make the **Port Palace** (from \$289) a popular pillow in Monte Carlo. The **Columbus Hotel** (from \$190) in Fontvieille sits adjacent to the Princess Grace Rose Garden and has a swimming pool and complimentary shuttle service to downtown. The hotel's signature cocktail, "Grace," is a blend of candied rose petals, champagne, and rose liqueur. **Hotel Miramar**'s 11 rooms (from \$154) have a view of the Prince's Palace and yacht harbor. The hotel's rooftop bar is an excellent perch during May's Formula 1 Grand Prix, when cars scream by within feet of the hotel. ■



The Casino of Monte Carlo, designed by Charles Garnier of Paris Opera House fame, exudes 007 glam thanks to roles in two James Bond films.



Pioneering: Louisville makes soy sauce, baseball bats, and Maya-inspired fare.

GO NOW

Louisville's Sweet Spots

What to do beyond the Kentucky Derby. | By JANELLE NANOS

Louisville dominates the sporting calendar for two minutes in May, but there's more to this Kentucky city than mint juleps, big hats, and purebred horses. Fun-loving Louisville is angling to become another Austin with a burgeoning arts scene, the new KFC Yum! Center sports arena, and a clutch of farm-to-table restaurants.

PARTY AT THE TRACK After almost 140 years of horse racing history, the legendary **Churchill Downs** racetrack began hosting the "Downs After Dark" program of night races in 2009. With live music and drink specials, the events attract a new fan base with theme nights that encourage disco costumes instead of broad-brimmed hats.

TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT If you're unfamiliar with the city's historic role in baseball, the 120-foot-tall bat, the world's largest (*above right*), on West Main Street, will clue you in. Since 1884, Hillerich & Bradsby Co. has crafted Louisville Slugger bats for some of the game's most famous players. Step into the batting cages at the **Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory** and take a swing at re-creating the game-winning runs of Babe Ruth and Derek Jeter. On the Ohio River waterfront, the **Muhammad Ali Center** traces the life of the boxer and Louisville native through the civil rights movement and beyond. Shadowbox against Ali, see his trophies and artwork, and watch films of 15 of his classic fights, including the "Rumble in the Jungle."

WALK BUTCHERS' BLOCKS In the former meatpacking section of the city, foodies head to the **Blind Pig**, the snout-to-tail gastropub that has been getting accolades for its house-made sausages and bacon-infused cocktails. The **Butchertown Market** is a reclaimed factory that now houses **Canoe** (Central Asian textiles), **Moss Hill** (mint julep soaps and lotions), and **Bourbon Barrel Foods**, which produces the country's only micro-brewed soy sauce from Kentucky-grown soybeans fermented in castoff bourbon barrels.

MEET NULU Hop the free trolley from downtown to the eastern edge of town to explore the East Market District. Locals have nicknamed the area New Louisville, or "NuLu." Browse **Scout**'s eclectic mix of modern furniture and locally made jewelry and **Hudson Home**'s sustainable housewares. Choose from over 400 brews at **Louisville Beer Store**, try the salbutes—Yucatán tortillas—at **Mayan Café**, or pick up a banana truffle cupcake from organic bakery **Cake Flour**.



Trueblue: Sink into egg chairs at Motel One or a comfy bed at the Big Sleep.

HOTEL CENTRAL

The Price is Right

Savvy travelers are snapping up deals as European hotel chains offer affordable city escapes. | By JULIANA GILLING

AS CITIES WAKE from the winter and beaches remain blissfully quiet, spring is a good time to experience the real Europe—especially at one of Europe's affordable hotel chains. These budget hotels focus on the essentials: stylish rooms, family-friendly packages, and great destinations at the doorstep.

Tucked away in a warren of streets beneath Spain's Alhambra—Andalusia's ancient citadel—is the **Hesperia Granada** (from \$82), a historic town house transformed into an elegant hotel. Hesperia is part of NH Hotels, which has more than 400 properties in such cities as Paris, Lisbon, Barcelona, and Bruges. The Hesperia Granada's kaleidoscopic glass dome topping its inner courtyard shows Moorish

influence. Spacious guest rooms have hardwood floors, marble bathrooms, and complimentary Internet.

By the end of 2011, **Motel One**, known for its fresh minimalist style, will have 39 hotels in Germany and two in Austria (from \$67). Hotel interiors combine stone walls with designer pieces such as Arne Jacobsen's curvaceous egg chairs. Compact guest rooms feature high-end fixtures including flat-screen TVs, iPod docks, and monsoon showers. One child under age 12 stays free. Every hotel has a One Lounge, which stays open 24/7 as a cafeteria and bar. Motel One's 409-room Berlin-Tiergarten hotel is a ten-minute walk to the 630-acre Tiergarten, Berlin's answer to Central Park.

APARTMENT THERAPY

Live like a local in these European abodes.

Ease into the apartment life-style with **base2stay**, which offers contemporary accommodations in London and Liverpool with concierge service, mini kitchens, and free Wi-Fi (from

\$146 London; \$102 Liverpool). Its 106-room Liverpool base—housed in a 19th-century redbrick print works—is the ideal post from which to visit the Beatles Story museum and the Museum

of Liverpool, opening in July. Go boho in Paris with the pretty **Marais Trésor** studio apartment (from \$124), just a few minutes' walk from the Centre Pompidou and the Louvre. Or play the socialite in Rome while staying at the **Antiquariato Loft** apartment (from \$152). Its roof garden over-

looks the fashionable Trastevere district known for its trattorias. Both properties are rented through **WayToStay**. At the foot of the Mont Blanc mountain in Chamonix, the **Residence La Rivière** contains tidy apartments that sleep four (from \$806 per week; www.zenithholidays.co.uk).

Wales's capital city, Cardiff, was the first site for the **Big Sleep Hotel** (from \$72), the trendy brand backed by John Malkovich. The converted 1960s office building features Formica furniture and candy-colored walls behind its green glass facade. Guests enjoy complimentary breakfasts before they set off to tour Cardiff Castle or roar with the rugby crowds at the Millennium Stadium. Other Big Sleep hotels have opened in the English towns of Cheltenham and Eastbourne.

Premier Inn's cheerful purple logo is a familiar sight for budget-conscious travelers in the U.K. and Ireland with over 580 hotels (from \$47). Every hotel provides spacious, family-size rooms that can accommodate up to four people. Premier Inn's new **Belfast Titanic Quarter hotel**, in the area where the famed ship was built, offers 121 modern rooms and views over the waterfront and city.

French chain **Campanile** (from \$55) is revamping its 395 hotels across Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and the U.K. Changes include higher quality bedding and modern touches such as Wi-Fi and New Generation restaurants, developed with Michelin star chef Pierre Gagnaire to showcase Gallic cuisine.

Barceló's **Old Town Praha hotel** in Prague (from \$147) is part of a chain that has 181 properties ranging from affordable city center hotels to beach resorts. This boutique hotel, with 62 loft-style rooms, is in a former palace, next to the 15th-century Powder Tower in the city's Old Town. ■



Walk to the Alhambra from the Hesperia Granada.

CHECKING IN

Portugal's New Hotels

One of Europe's most wallet-friendly countries has opened a trove of stylish hotels and resorts. | By JOANN GRECO

CS Vintage Lisboa Hotel

LISBON

This 56-room hotel evokes the pleasures of an urban apartment building from the 1920s. The graceful lobby is outfitted in coppery brown leather sofas, mirrored black wood tables, and celadon rugs, while guest rooms boast photos of vintage Lisbon and stylish touches like velvet chairs and gray faux-fur throws. Just steps away, the Avenida da Liberdade, the capital's high-end shopping street, features beautiful blue mosaic sidewalks and elegant fountains. From \$166.



Uphill in Lisbon.

Altis Avenida

LISBON

Located next to Avenida da Liberdade, this 70-room hotel is ideally positioned at the nexus of Baixa, Alfama, and Bairro Alto—the three Lisbon neighborhoods

you'll find yourself returning to again and again. To get your bearings, head straight to the rooftop Brasserie Gourmet Rossio for a panoramic view of the city. Guest rooms have art deco touches such as black-and-white diamond-patterned carpeting and leather headboards. Nearby, check out the neo-Gothic iron Santa Justa street elevator. Connecting the lower streets of Baixa to the hilltop Bairro Alto, it was designed by an apprentice of Gustav Eiffel and provides welcome relief when you cannot face another Lisbon climb. From \$200.



Chic chamber: Puffed pillows welcome guests to Altis Avenida.

The Oitavos

CASCAIS

Indoors and outdoors merge at this coastal resort that blends a palette of sky blues and grays with a generous use of glass and emphasizes spa treatments. On the ground floor, public spaces—including the seafood-centric Ipsylon restaurant—lead to a wrap-around terrace and infinity, seawater-fed pool. Upstairs, three floors of large, sparsely decorated guest rooms boast ocean views. Outdoors, the surrounding landscape of endless water, sand dunes, Atlantic grasses, and native pines inspires, and a riding academy and top-rated Arthur Hills golf course awaits. The charming beach town of Cascais is a five-minute drive away. From \$380.

Vidago Palace

VIDAGO

Hotelier Grace Leo jump-started Lisbon's boutique hotel boom a few years ago when she unveiled the funky Hotel Bairro Alto. Her latest venture is a renovation of a salmon-colored, century-old palace turned hotel surrounded by 250 acres of parkland filled with camellia bushes and magnolia trees just an hour east of Porto. The hotel's guest rooms feature walls with painted botanicals, Portuguese tiles, and hand-loomed rugs. In the garden, fountains gurgle with the area's famous mineral waters—which play a central role in the hotel spa. From \$166.



The Roosevelt's signature spirits.

[DEALS]

WHERE TO STAY IN NEW ORLEANS

FRENCH QUARTER > HOTEL MONTELEONE

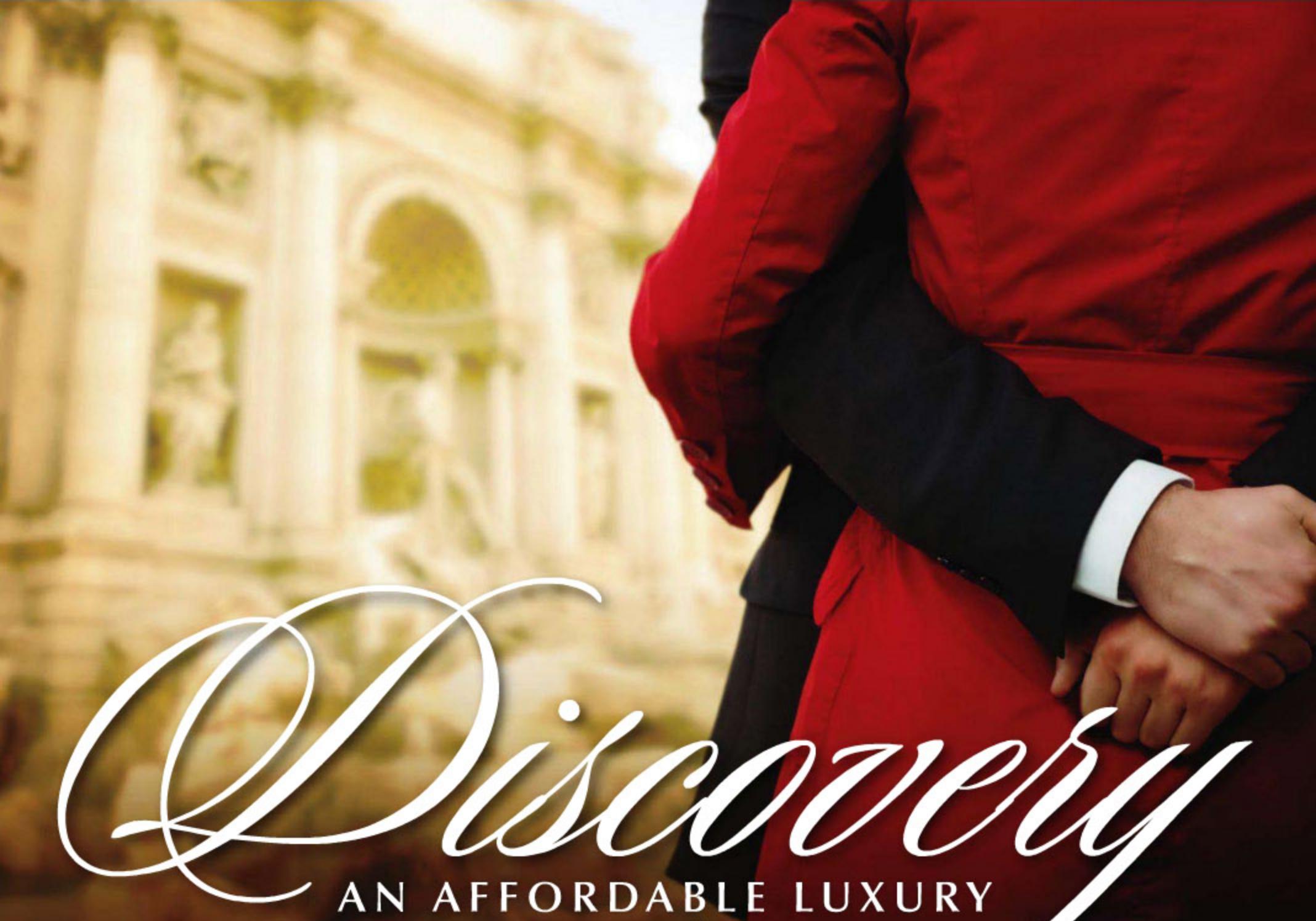
Truman Capote claimed he was born in this late 19th-century edifice, which is unlikely, but the *Breakfast at Tiffany's* author and other writers such as Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner certainly were well-watered at the Hotel Monteleone. Its famed Carousel Bar, which revolves counter-clockwise, is filled with tourists and locals alike enjoying both a signature Vieux Carré cocktail and the view on Royal Street. The rooftop pool boasts views of downtown. From \$99.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DIST. > THE ROOSEVELT

The Roosevelt seemed to be the last word in luxe when it opened in 1893 in the city's old downtown business area near the French Quarter. Governor Huey "Kingfish" Long frequented a 12th-floor suite during the Great Depression. New Orleanians love the place for the lobby's annual Christmas lighting and the storied Sazerac Bar. Lavishly restored after Katrina and reopened in 2009, the hotel's 504 traditional guest rooms have been redone in gold tones with an occasional French flourish. From \$149.

UPTOWN > PARKVIEW GUESTHOUSE

Sheltered by oak canopies and located far from Bourbon Street's blare, Uptown is New Orleans's most fashionable neighborhood of stately residences. The Parkview, a Victorian mansion, is smack in the middle of the gentility, sitting on the St. Charles Avenue streetcar line and across from Audubon Park and Audubon Zoo. The Parkview's 21 rooms—reserve one with a balcony—are furnished with four-poster beds and antiques. The complimentary breakfast features homemade waffles, fresh biscuits, and jovial banter from the friendly staff. In the afternoon, bottles of wine and sherry materialize for impromptu drinks on the front porch. From \$169. —Tyrell Groom



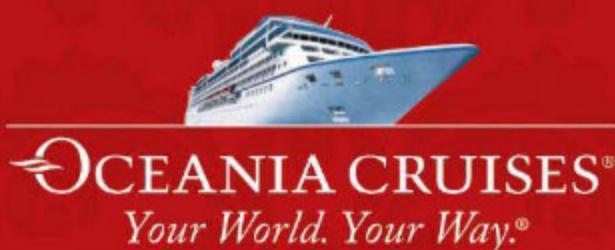
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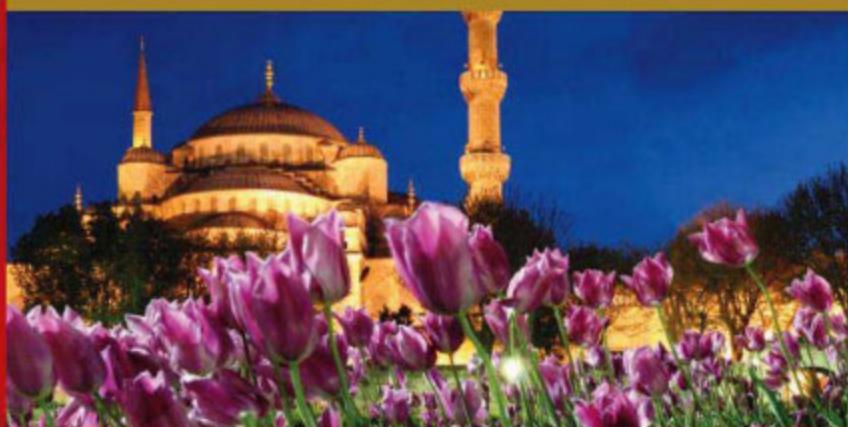
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Ooh la la: Fruits de mer at Les Fables (left) and duo dining at Le Comptoir (right).

TASTE OF TRAVEL

The Petit Bistros of Paris

City restaurants shrink in size—but not in ambition—and serve memorable meals for all appetites. | By RAPHAEL KADUSHIN

HAUTE CUISINE, at least in Paris, has gone on one big diet. Forget the traditional bloated dinner tab, the palatial dining rooms filled with gilded furnishings, heirloom silverware, and the endless degustation menus. Replacing all that ceremony is the march of the down-sized baby bistros that have turned the city into a culinary playpen.

The trend began, slowly, in the nineties when several chefs left behind their Michelin-starred restaurants, abandoned their state-of-the-art kitchens, and opened homey bistros where they could cook what they wanted for the sheer passionate fun of it. Precocious young chefs, itchy for culinary autonomy, followed. So did patrons looking for an affordable dinner.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOSH

Three places to eat during a day in the Marais.

If you run out of baby bistros and are still looking for an affordable Parisian dinner, head to the Marais, a dynamic, historic neighborhood. Among the best bargain-priced dining spots: Au

How do you define this breed of eatery? Some baby bistros are combination groceries and diners. Some could pass for delis or gastropubs. But almost all are small, inexpensive by Parisian standards, and focused on locally foraged ingredients. What the chefs do with those ingredients ranges from rediscovering arcane regional French recipes to creating new culinary hybrids. But all of them are finding the space to experiment, and they're turning out some of the freshest food in Paris.

To see where the movement began, make a pilgrimage to **La Régalade**, launched in 1992 when Yves Camdeborde defected from the posh Hôtel de Crillon and opened this cozy baby bistro lined with burgundy banquets. Quickly becoming its own

des Musées (49 Rue de Turenne) offers French bistro signature dishes, including a standout steak frites. **L'As du Fallafel** (34 Rue des Rosiers) is easy to find because of the snaking line of patrons outside its takeout window waiting to pick up fresh falafel in pita heaped with fried eggplant and cabbage.



Tasty fare from L'As du Fallafel.

kind of classic, **Le Régalade** continues to thrive under chef Bruno Doucet, luring serious gourmands out to the distant 14th arrondissement for its roasted pigeon.

A second, more central, **La Régalade Saint-Honoré** debuted in 2010. The prices are still low (33 euros for three courses) and the crowd eclectic (Chanel meets flannel). But the real lure is chef Doucet's devotion to succulent Gallic produce. Tellingly, one of the bistro's most talked about dishes is a plate of dusky morel mushrooms in cream sauce, studded with croutons. There are big meaty flavors too, though even the standout crisp-skin pork comes paired with almost juicy lentils.

On the Left Bank's Rue Saint-Dominique, the dollhouse-size **Les Fables de La Fontaine** features fish hauled in fresh from Normandy and Brittany. Thirty-five euros buys you a three-course lunch (complete with wine) that tastes like a seafood masterpiece. But it's hard to avoid ogling the à la carte listings when the options can include sea bream crowned with black truffle sauce, and an almost tropical mascarpone roused by oranges, clementines, and coconut sorbet.

Over in the 11th arrondissement, **Jeanne A** is a multitasking grocery and restaurant combination. That explains the hams hanging like chandeliers from the ceiling, the bins of fresh produce, and the charcuterie case. Provision your picnic or eat at the long communal table with room for 15. Savvy locals are willing to knock knees for a taste of the specialty roasts that may feature a black-footed chicken from the Challans region or a spit-roasted duck served with fried foie gras or chorizo.

In the linked world of baby bistros everything eventually comes full circle. Yves Camdeborde, who opened that first **La Régalade** kitchen, has returned over a decade later to the Left Bank, art deco **Le Comptoir du Relais**. Book ahead if you hope to snag a table for the multicourse dinner (50 euros). When you sample the foie gras with truffles, the braised beef cheeks, and the mango tarte tatin, you'll be tasting the nuanced flavors of a minor revolution that has now fully come of age. ■

FAMILY

Summer Vacay: Are We There Yet?

The great outdoors beckons families with fun. | By MARGARET LOFTUS

Some families are summer vacation traditionalists, never veering from their two weeks together at a condo at the beach or the cabin on the lake. But for those who like to mix it up, here are some out-of-the-box options.

OUTDOOR ESCAPES ▶ The 15 tree houses at **Out' n' About Treesort** in southwestern Oregon's Siskiyou Mountains range from a gazebo 37 feet aloft and accessible only by a canopy walkway to the "Swiss Family Complex," with separate units for adults and kids and your choice of exit: sliding down a fire pole or swinging from a rope. Back on terra firma, there's a swimming pool fed by a nearby river and lessons on design and building your own hideout. From \$120, including breakfast.

Stay in a Native American tepee (sleeps up to eight) or in a log cabin in an area of southeastern Ohio known for its spectacular sandstone formations. The resort, **At Boulders Edge**, is close to Hocking Hills State Park for hiking, mountain biking, kayaking, zip-lining, and tumbling down the hills in a giant inflatable ball. From \$75.

BACK TO NATURE ▶ At the College of the Atlantic's **Family Nature Camp** in Bar Harbor, Maine, families explore the natural world—birds, tide pools, beaver habitat—on guided field trips along the craggy coast of

Mount Desert Island and Acadia National Park. Help assemble a minke whale skeleton and take a spin aboard the *Starfish Enterprise* with Diver Ed, who brings sea urchins, sea cucumbers, hermit crabs, and other critters up from the ocean floor for you to touch. One-week stay from \$850 per adult; \$425 for kids 15 and under.

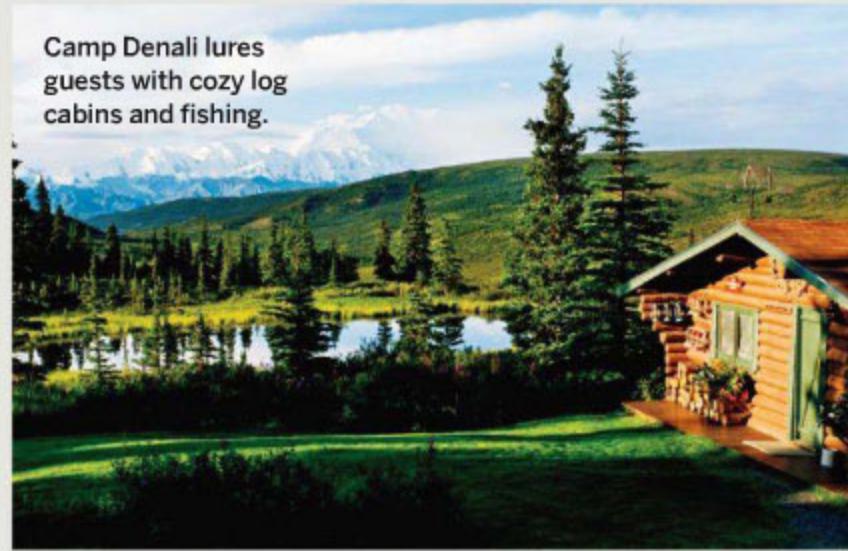
Our chances of seeing the aurora borealis are greater this year as the sun enters a period of increased activity. Learn what causes the phenomenon at a special program led by space expert Neal Brown. It's one of several nature sessions this summer at **Camp Denali**,



a 17-cabin retreat in Alaska's Denali National Park. Should the aurora kick up, guests get a wake-up call from Brown via handheld radios. Three-night weekend (all-inclusive) rates from \$1,545; \$1,159 for kids.

ADVENTURE ▶ Raft Idaho's Salmon River on ROW Adventures' five-day **Family Magic Rafting Trip**. The pace is easy with ample opportunity to loll on beaches, take guided nature hikes, and discover Indian rock art and pioneer homesteads. Your tent and an outdoor living area are set up when you arrive at camp each day. From \$1,235; \$995 for kids.

It's not out West, but the sprawling **Pisgah View Ranch** in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina has all the amenities of a classic dude ranch. There's daily horseback riding, roping, hiking, and fishing, as well as cookouts every Saturday night. Choose from 20 private cabins, including four on a lake. From \$110 per person.



Camp Denali lures guests with cozy log cabins and fishing.



[ITINERARY]

BALTIMORE CHARMS KIDS

PLAY Kids will delight in the weird, wonderful world of the **American Visionary Art Museum** (AVAM), a mosaic-encrusted shrine to "outsider" art in laid-back Federal Hill near the Inner Harbor of Baltimore. Its outdoor plaza has a mirror-covered school bus and a climbable tree house. Through September 4, giggle your way through "What Makes Us Smile?" co-curated by Matt Groening of *The Simpsons*. Nearby, the hands-on **Maryland Science Center** features full-size dinosaur replicas and an IMAX movie screen. Across the harbor, the ultrapopular **National Aquarium** offers live dolphin shows and a theater with 4-D effects (wind, mist).

EAT Visit historic **Cross Street Market** for deli sandwiches, crabs, and fudge-slathered Berger cookies, then picnic near the Civil War-era cannons at the top of Federal Hill.

STAY **Brookshire Suites** makes a prime base for exploring the Inner Harbor. Packages offer VIP access to AVAM, the National Aquarium, and Port Discovery Children's Museum. Breakfast is free. Family packages from \$199.

—Katie Knorovsky



Big Apple Apps: Navigating New York City with kids is more fun (and easier) with these apps in hand. At the American Museum of Natural History, old-school dioramas go high-tech with **AMNH Explorer**. Select one of the suggested tours, then follow the directions to each display. Travelers with tots can use **iKidNY** to find changing tables and subway stops with elevators for stroller accessibility. The **TKTS app** lets you see which Broadway shows offer cut-rate tickets before you queue up at the discount booth, while **NYC Way** steers parents to kid-friendly restaurants. —Alisson Clark



Sunny salutations from California, where wonders never cease thanks to pioneers of positive change like Frank Almeda. Botanist and green-weaver, Frank's living roof turned the California Academy of Sciences – one of the most amazing museums in the world – into one of the greenest on the planet.

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PORT OF CALL

Sicily's Answer to Amalfi

Off the ship in hedonistic Taormina. | By RAPHAEL KADUSHIN

Taormina has lured hedonists to Sicily's northeastern coast since the Greeks founded the resort town in the fourth century B.C. More and more spring and summer Mediterranean cruises have made this essentially one-street town, perched on a cliff overlooking the Ionian Sea, a regular port of call. Most ships dock just for the day in Giardini Bay (about 20 minutes by ship shuttle from Taormina). Among the top draws:

Take to the Stage

2 HOURS

The third-century-B.C. **Teatro Greco** is considered one of Sicily's premier classical treasures. The monument has drawn avid literary visitors such as Oscar Wilde and Tennessee Williams. The stage still hosts performances, but the real scene-stealer is the view of Taormina's medieval center and a stately Mount Etna, perfectly framed behind the theater columns.

One-Street Shopping

2 OR MORE HOURS

Taormina's **Corso Umberto** shoots from one end of town to the other, offering regional specialties from marzipan to Sicilian knight

marionettes. Start with a scoop of passion fruit gelato from Gelatomania, browse the prints of Mount Etna from L'Agorà boutique, or pick up some sweet almond wine from La Torinese. Stop in at the Museo Siciliano di Arte e Tradizioni Popolari, a quirky folk museum.

Skim the Coast

4 OR MORE HOURS

The public beaches of **Taormina Mare** are easily accessible by the gondola descending from Taormina proper every 15 minutes. A nominal fee gains access to one of the lidos that offer sun loungers, changing rooms, and cafés, as well as rental boats with which to tour the coast.

Lunch Alfresco

2 HOURS

The terrace of the 19th-century **Grand Hotel Timeo**, where Sophia Loren and Audrey Hepburn once posed, is the best place to contemplate Taormina's own perfect profile while you dine on shellfish risotto and Sicilian cheeses.

The Godfather Tour

5.5 HOURS

Sicily Life hosts a half-day cinematic tour of surrounding medieval hill towns that includes Savoca, where parts of *The Godfather* were filmed (\$239 for a group of three). You'll stop for lemon granita at Bar Vitelli, one of Francis Ford Coppola's favorite watering holes.



Main street: Strollers along Corso Umberto pass Mocambo bar and San Giuseppe church.

ADVENTURE

Running Through the Streets

Jogging routes around the world for travelers. | By SHIVANI VORA

Walking is the classic way to see a city, but running lets you cover ground faster (and burn more calories). New York City's 6.1-mile **Central Park Loop**, for instance, lets the fleet-footed take in lush greenery, historic buildings, and the energy of the residents who call this metropolis home. Here are more great runs.

SEA POINT PROMENADE, CAPE TOWN > Few beachfront running paths compare to the splendor of this 6.8-mile flat route: Runners encounter panoramic views of the water, city, and mountains at every turn of the road; time your outing for sunset, when the vistas are even more spectacular. From June to November, you might spot a whale offshore.

HYDE PARK, LONDON > Some 900 years ago, boars used to roam the grounds. Though the park is generally free of wild animals today, a four-mile path favored by runners still courses around interesting sights such as groups of red-coated royal guardsmen and Londoners opining vociferously at **Speakers' Corner** on Sunday mornings.

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN, SYDNEY > These gardens with postcard views of **Harbour Bridge** and the **Opera House** date back to 1816, when the city's governor wanted a parkland setting for his grand home. Joggers on three miles of paved paths can see the more than 45,000 plants that flourish here, including white lily trees and towering silky oaks. They might also spot birds such as cockatoos, moorhens, barn owls, or masked lapwings.

STANLEY PARK SEAWALL, VANCOUVER > Run the 5.5-mile waterfront flat path along a stone wall in Canada's most popular park for views of the city's downtown, the North Shore Mountains, and the Gulf Islands in the distance. Sightings of bald eagles, herons, and seals are common. Don't run so fast that you miss **Siwash Rock**, a 60-foot-tall stone formation millions of years old.

IMPERIAL PALACE, TOKYO > Once travelers return to Tokyo, they can jog around one of the world's most expensive parcels of land for free: This 3.1-mile path circles the Japanese emperor's main residence and homes of the imperial family. You'll pass a moat lined with cherry blossom trees and palace gardens lush with azaleas and hydrangeas. The route also offers glimpses of the **National Museum of Modern Art** and the **Tokyo Tower**.



Runner's world: Sydney's skyscrapers are visible beyond the leafy Royal Botanic Garden.

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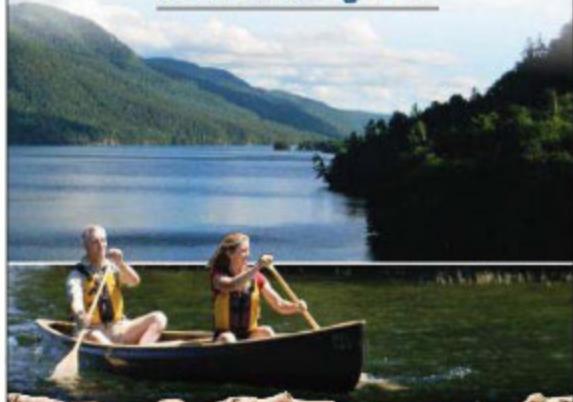


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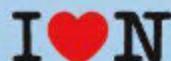
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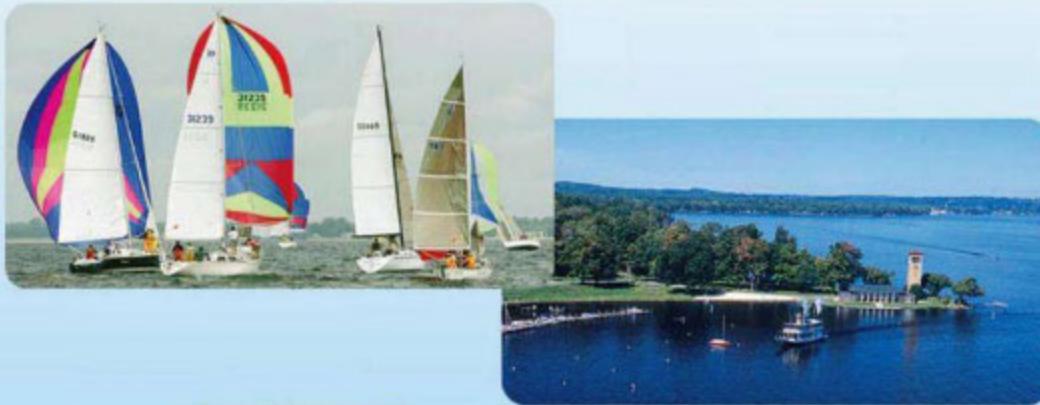
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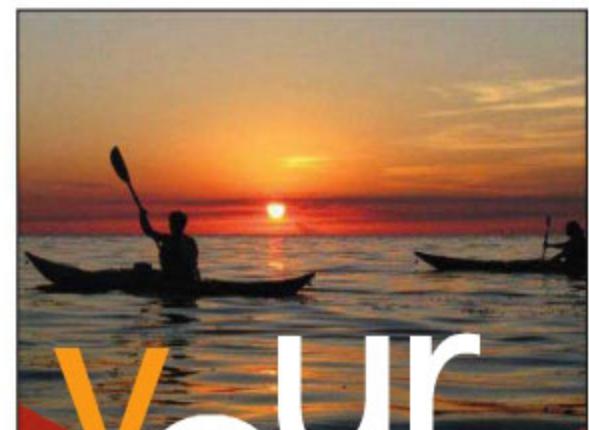
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[ASK A PARK RANGER]

VISITING THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

Q We plan to drive through Great Smoky Mountains National Park this summer but hope to avoid the traffic and the crowds. Can you suggest some less traveled routes?

A "You're not going to see all of the park, with over a half million acres, in one visit," says ranger Lynda Doucette, a 22-year veteran of the park service. "I'd rather folks spend time in one location absorbing and enjoying it." During the summer, cars often back up along the 32-mile Newfound Gap Road that bisects the heart of the park. Take advantage of the small pull-offs that only accommodate a few vehicles and allow you to explore quiet walkways on foot. Stop between mile markers 19 and 20 to hike the path along the North Carolina and Tennessee state line. "When you reach the backside of the mountain, you'll have spectacular views of the Oconaluftee River Valley and the Sugarland Mountains," says Doucette. From there, it's a short drive to the Clingmans Dome observation tower at the park's highest point (6,643 feet), which



Clingmans Dome offers wide views of the park.

offers up to a hundred miles of visibility on clear days. Veer off onto one-lane, dirt Balsam Mountain Road that cuts through the mountain range and is known for its brilliantly colored wildflowers, including bee balm, cardinal flowers, and fire pinks. "During the three-hour drive, you'll be lucky to see three other cars," says Doucette. Stop at the new Oconaluftee visitors center and Mountain Farm Museum to check out various log structures such as a barn, farmhouse, and smokehouse, plus Cherokee basketry, quilts, farming tools, and textiles from the Europeans who settled the area that's now parkland.

—Janelle Nanos

Want to ask a park ranger? Submit your question to travel_talk@ngs.org



Volcano views: Walk the one-mile Crater Rim Trail to get up close to Capulin Volcano.

ROAD TRIP

The Authentic Old West

A drive through scenic northeastern New Mexico recalls the pioneer lifestyle along the Santa Fe Trail. | By KATE SIBER

THERE ARE FEW PLACES where the Old West remains free from the T-shirt stores and other detritus of modern-day tourism, but northeastern New Mexico is one of them. A harsh, starkly beautiful landscape marked by prairies, volcanoes, pioneer homesteads, and villages straight out of a Western movie set, this is where cowboys walk the streets and artists weary of tourist towns like Santa Fe move to for peace and inspiration. The landscape has changed little since settlers, miners, and railroad workers passed through on the Santa Fe Trail, and a 400-mile driving route looping east from Taos makes a classic American road trip. Here, empty desert highways stretch to the horizon, views sprawl across the plains and Rockies, and ghost towns serve as poetic reminders of the country's not so distant frontier past.

SANTA FE TRAIL From Taos, wind 55 miles east along NM 64 as it drops through deep gorges of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the edge of the plains and the village of Cimarron, just outside Philmont Scout Ranch, the country's largest Boy Scout high adventure base. The

sleepy town itself was once a hub on the mountain branch of the Santa Fe Trail. More than a dozen historic buildings survive, including an old stone jail, courthouse, and gristmill, and local shops stock free historic walking tour maps. Don't miss the St. James Hotel (from \$70), once a wild hangout for unruly cowboys, outlaws, and lawmen. Characters like Jesse James and Wyatt Earp slept in the Victorian-era rooms, which are now refurbished with period wallpaper and four-poster beds. On the other side of town, several art galleries have moved into the Western-style storefronts. Peruse ceramics and Zuni jewelry at Blue Moon Eclectics, then



Cows along a highway near Johnson Mesa.

ISAAC COGDILL (LOWER LEFT), LEE HARKNESS (UPPER), TIM KELLER (LOWER RIGHT)

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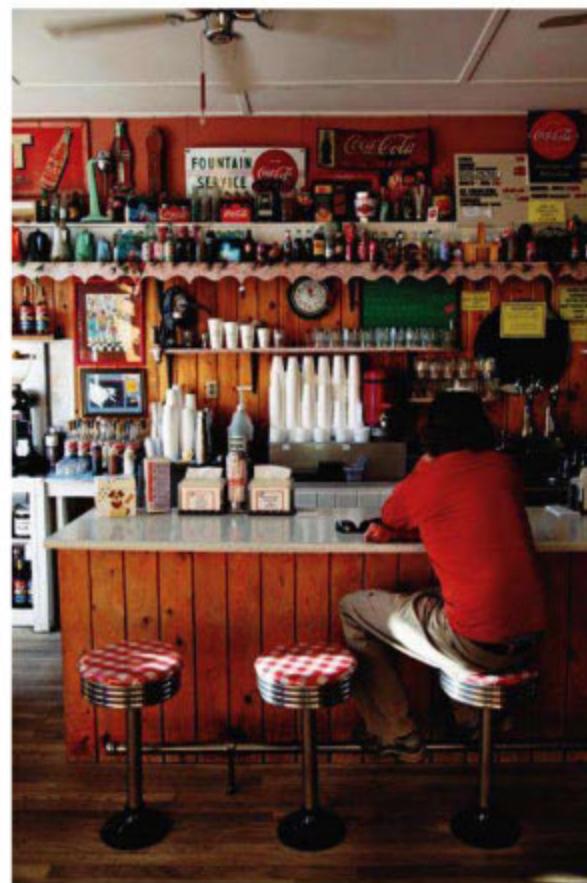
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Trade route: Wagon wheel ruts trace the Santa Fe Trail at Fort Union. Enjoy soda fountain treats at the Cimarron Art Gallery (far right). A scale (right) at the Folsom Museum harkens back to the building's days as the Doherty Mercantile Co.



wander next door for a root beer float at the Cimarron Art Gallery, which doubles as a soda fountain, originally installed in 1937 for visiting Boy Scouts.



RAILROAD BOOMTOWN As NM 64 pushes 40 miles east to Raton, the mountains peter out into the high plains but not without some fanfare: Dark rock formations rise out of pastures where cattle, buffalo, and pronghorn graze. Raton, once a flourishing railroad town along the Santa Fe Trail, hasn't changed much in

the past century. Walk around the historic district, where locals have refurbished two old theaters. Collectors sell antiques from historic storefronts, and an art gallery moved into the 1910 Wells Fargo Express building. For good Mexican food, head to Sands Restaurant, a dive diner.

COAL-MINING GHOST TOWN Sugarite Canyon State Park, six miles north of Raton on NM 72 and 526, protects the remains of a 1912 coal-mining town once inhabited by hundreds of fortune-seeking immigrants. A trail with signs leads past the old stone post office and weed-choked ruins of a school, shops, and homes—all a testament to how quickly a working town could go bust in the Old West. Nearby, stroll through wildflowers and up onto a mesa for views over the canyon on some of the park's 14-plus miles of hiking trails, then picnic on the shore of Lake Maloya.

PREHISTORIC DISCOVERIES Drive 36 miles east on 72 over the sprawling Johnson Mesa and past a pioneer church, old homesteads, and views of the Rocky Mountains. Folsom, a loose collection of ranches and abandoned storefronts, is more famous than it looks: In 1908, a

CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: GEORGE H. H. HUFFY; KATE SIBER; TIM KELLER

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local ranch hand discovered ancient bison bones and man-made projectiles that helped archaeologists prove humans walked the continent some 10,000 years ago, far earlier than previously thought. The Folsom Museum, housed in an 1896 merchant building, exhibits historical memorabilia, such as notes by the archaeologists and replicas of the stone tools.

VOLCANO VIEWS Drive nine miles south on NM 325 to reach Capulin Volcano National Monument, one of the nation's best preserved cinder cone volcanoes. A trail leads around the rim of the crater and offers views over the 8,000-square-mile Raton-Clayton volcano field, dotted with craters and hardened lava flows. On a clear day, visitors can see four states from the tallest point on the rim.

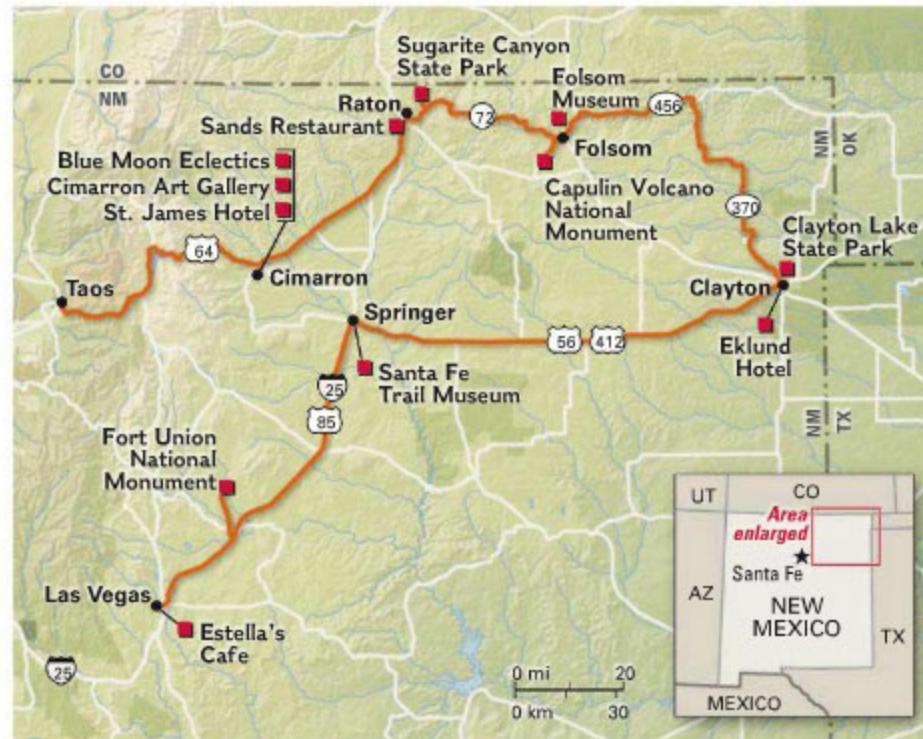
DINOSAUR TRACKS Backtrack up 325, then take NM 456 east through mesas, canyons, and valleys frequented by elk and bear, then turn right on NM 370 to Clayton Lake State Park. A half-mile path

leads to a trove of dinosaur tracks with about 500 footprints from some six species. The low light of late afternoon is the best time to see the 100-million-year-old outlines of their toes.

CAVALRY FORT Traveling 150 miles southwest along 370, 412/56, and I-25, drivers see the Rockies as pioneers would have seen them—with no modern intrusions. Along the way to Fort Union, stop to see the Eklund Hotel in Clayton and the

Santa Fe Trail Museum in Springer; both are sleepy farm towns spattered with historic buildings. Fort Union was first established in 1851 as a garrison for soldiers defending the Santa Fe Trail from Indian attacks. Today, visitors can see the fort's adobe ruins and the largest visible network of ruts from the famed wagon route.

COLONIAL CITY Las Vegas, about 30 miles south on I-25, rivaled Denver in size and prestige in the mid-1800s. Founded in 1835, it was the last Spanish colony to be formed in North America. Over the years it became a stop on the Santa Fe Trail, a railroad boomtown, and movie set for silent filmmakers. A long depression helped save downtown's historic architecture from renovation, and now some 900 buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Walk around the plaza and Bridge Street to view examples of mid-19th-century adobes and Italianate Victorian storefronts. Estella's Café serves classic New Mexican fare like chiles rellenos. ■





Going with the wind: Many trees in Patagonia are bent permanently by the air currents.

EXPERIENCE

Whipped Into Shape

On a dark and stormy night, the wind strengthens one man's spirit in Patagonia. | By SIMON WORRALL

THE WIND STARTS up just before midnight, like a giant turbine kicking into action. I am lying alone in a tent on the floor of a small canyon lined with marsh grass and needle-sharp calafate bushes on a bend of the Río Deseado, a tidal river on the Atlantic coast of Patagonia, 15 miles inland from the town of Puerto Deseado, Argentina.

I'm ostensibly in this remote spot to write, but really I'm running from a whole heap of trouble. My marriage is teetering on the brink. My stepdaughter has brought heartache and chaos into our lives. I have doused myself with Malbec wine to stanch the wounds. In Patagonia, I feel like a prisoner set free. Day after day, I chase the horizon, driving four, five hundred miles on gravel roads as I try to outrun the past and numb the aching in my heart.

The wind is my constant companion. From the Cordillera del Viento, or Mountains of the Wind, in Neuquén Province, where I began my journey, it has blown me south, like a piece of thistledown, as I cross and recross vast, open spaces of the steppe, from the Andes to the Atlantic. A gaucho on a horse; a leaping guanaco; or

a nandu, as they call the ostrichlike rhea here, are sometimes the only living things I see in a day. But the wind has never left my side. It is a living thing: violent, capricious, tender. One moment, it sends miniature tornadoes of dust spiraling into the air, like a cobra. The next, it ruffles the tips of the grasses, like a mother stroking a child's hair. In a town called Zapala, a blast of wind strikes my jeep with such violence that it blasts a hole through the rear window. In Puerto Deseado, the wind turns my hotel into a giant musical instrument. The ventilation grill in the bathroom drones like a bagpipe, an oil drum in the parking lot below vibrates like a didgeridoo, the railings on the balcony wail like flutes.

Now, I lie in the darkness listening to the wind hammer the thin membrane of canvas. It blows through me as it would an abandoned house. The berries on the molle tree outside the tent shake. Pebbles skitter across the canyon floor. The night is so dark I cannot see my hand in front of my face. I click on my flashlight, and the inside of the tent floods with light. I am a moth in a paper lampshade.

The Tehuelche Indians, Patagonia's

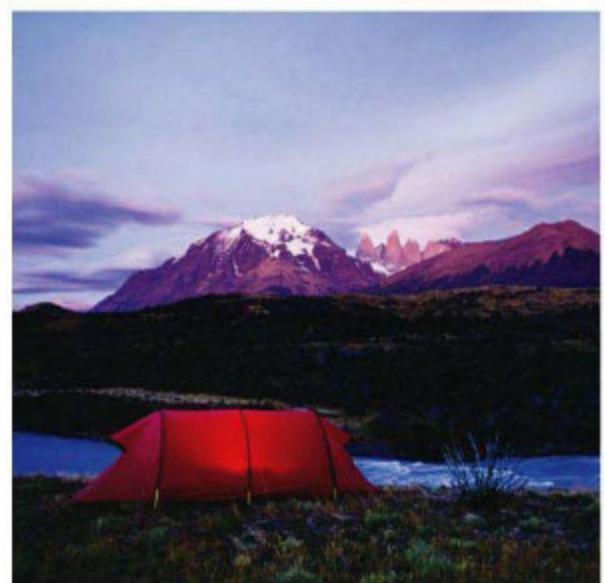
original inhabitants, imagined the wind as a mythic being named Shamej Gooshe, literally the Wind Which Goes Round. In folktales and legends, Shamej Gooshe dragged people and animals into his underground lair and killed them. Now, it seems, the god has come for me. In my mind's eye, he appears like Magua, the bloodthirsty warrior in *Last of the Mohicans*, with a huge head and a mane of long hair that lashes against the canvas.

There is nothing random about Shamej Gooshe's assaults. He approaches his work of destruction patiently, methodically. After giving the front of the tent a good pummeling, he moves to the back and begins to batter the flimsy canvas like a boxer hitting a punching bag. He grows still—has the wind lost interest in me?—only to spring again with renewed force. The sidewalls and front of the tent collapse, and I lie there with the canvas pressed shroud-like against my face. I prepare for the moment the steel pegs will at last release their failing grip, when I shall be hurled, head over heels, down the riverbank and into the water.

But at last dawn comes, and the wind subsides. I crawl out of my crumpled tent and clamber to the top of a hill. Below me, the Río Deseado snakes away to the horizon in a series of sinuous, oxbow curves—melted chocolate against the landscape. The rising sun warms my face and makes the rocks glow red. Streamers of pink cloud float on the horizon. A little bird, or *pajarito*, lands on a branch and chirrups merrily.

Shamej Gooshe has spared me. I will survive. ■

Puerto Deseado, in the central Patagonian region of Argentina, lies on the Atlantic coast. Local tour operators such as Darwin Expediciones (www.darwin-expeditions.com) arrange a variety of excursions.



A tent pitched within sight of Torres del Paine.

[AUTHENTIC GOODS]

INDIA REVITALIZES AN ANCIENT CRAFT

WHAT Hand block-printed textiles have been worn for centuries in India by everyone from courtiers to the common man. In rural towns such as Burhanpur and Kannauj, the diverse patterns of paisley, flowers, and trellis symbolize class, profession, or marital status. The traditional printing process involves hand blocks carved from teak, coloring with dyes, and a constantly refreshed palette of designs that are stamped onto fabric. But the number of artisans skilled at this ancient Indian craft has decreased drastically as the status of the profession fades.

WHERE The Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing in Jaipur was founded in 2005 to create ways to sustain the craft. Today, Anokhi, which means "unique" in Hindi, provides work for some 2,000 printers, carvers, weavers, and dyers who mostly work from home in their villages. The finished printed fabric is then sold as tunics, saris, bedspreads, and table linens in stores throughout the U.K. and India. Prices range from \$5 for a pillowcase to \$130 for a quilted silk coat. Two additional



places where you can buy the textiles are **Rangotri** in Sanganer (www.rangotri.com) and **Soma** (www.somasshop.com), which has shops in Jaipur, Delhi, Mumbai, Udaipur, and Bangalore. Anokhi scarves, caftans, and home furnishings can be purchased online through Anokhi U.S.A. (www.anokhiusa.com).

TIPS How do you tell if a textile is hand block printed? "Examine the cloth closely and look for small shifts in pattern and a slight overlapping of colors every few inches," says Rachel Bracken-Singh, director and founder of Anokhi. "Even the most precise prints will show block marks." —Kristan Schiller

[BOOKSHELF]

GREAT TRAVELS, GREAT READS

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ROGER HOUSDEN

As a young man, Roger Housden fell in love with the 3,000-year-old culture of Persia. Four decades later, he finally visited the land that had so enchanted him. Along the way, Housden composes a picture-puzzle of modern Iran.

THE SLY COMPANY OF PEOPLE WHO CARE

RAHUL BHATTACHARYA

This engaging novel casts a brilliant light on the obscure country of Guyana, the Idaho-size nation on the northern coast of South America. Bhattacharya's protagonist is a 26-year-old cricket journalist from Bombay whose adventures in



Guyana take us from the decaying wood and zinc houses of the capital, Georgetown, to sugarcane plantations.

DOLCI DI LOVE

SARAH-KATE LYNCH

Tuscany is the stage for this twisty love story involving a successful American businesswoman, Lily Turner, who is shocked to discover her husband has a second life—and family—in Italy. When she leaves Manhattan to confront the hubby in the village of Montevedova, a series of unexpected encounters ensues, orchestrated by a wily group called the Secret League of Widowed Darners.

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PAUL THEROUX

Compiled by one of America's pre-eminent travel writers, this collection of quotations and commentaries celebrates the rigors and riches of engaged travel. The assemblage of globe-girdling writers includes Samuel Johnson, Freya Stark, and Mark Twain. —Don George

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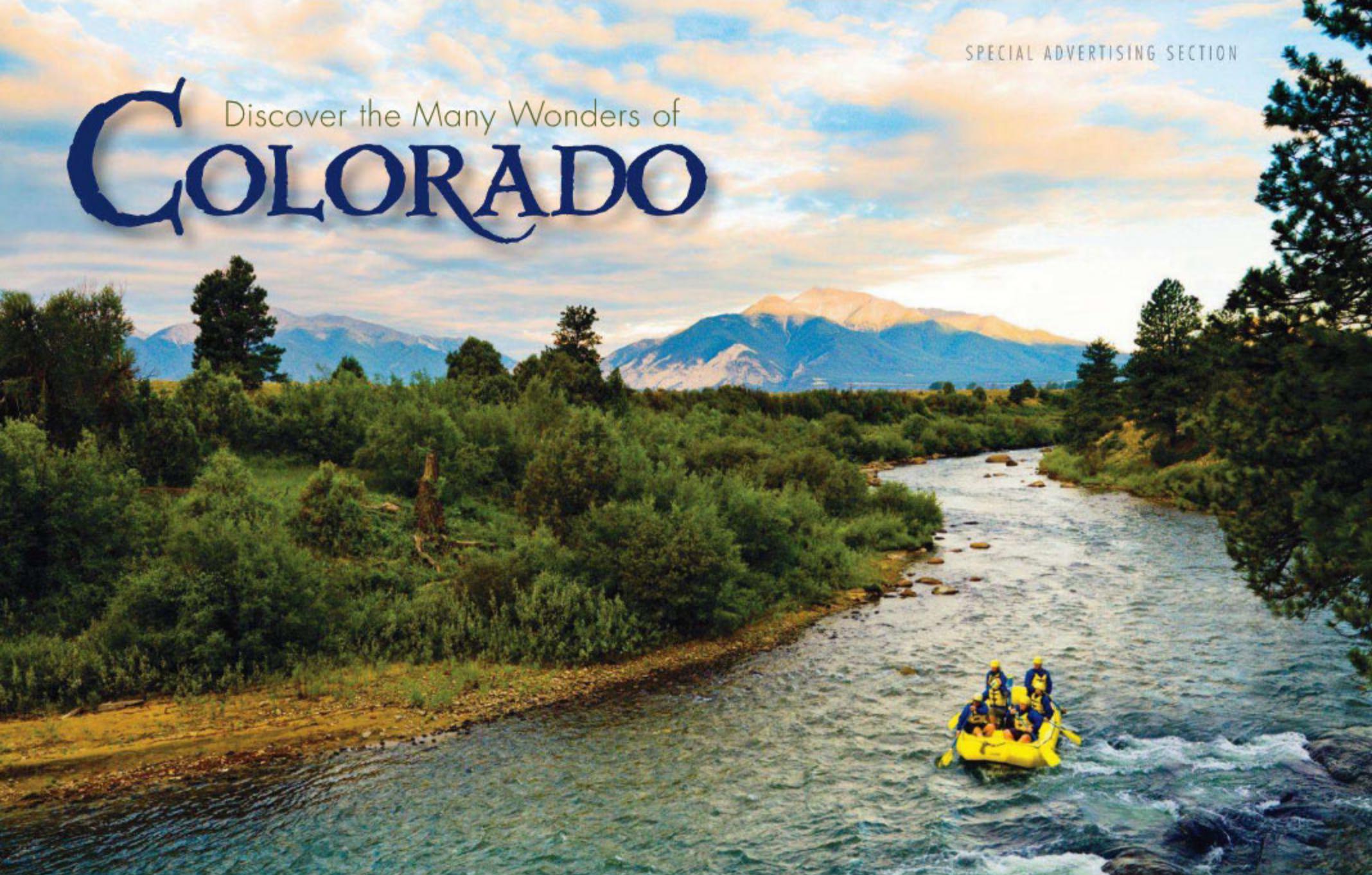
Purple haze: A field of lavender near Valensole, Haute Provence, France.

ESCAPE

Aroma Therapy NO REGION IN THE WORLD is more closely associated with lavender than Provence. With its hot, dry summers and chalky soil, this slice of southeastern France produces roughly half the world's lavender. The famously alluring flower has long been prized for its vibrant blooms, intoxicating aroma, and soothing effects. It's the rare gift shop in these parts that doesn't stock sachets filled with dried lavender or lavender-flavored sweets. And if it weren't for the *Lavandula*, many Provençal artists might go broke. But the best way to experience the beauty queen of Provence is out in the shimmering fields. In June and July, the landscape is blanketed with bushes; dense rows stripe the countryside in pale violet to inky blue hues (and traffic slows to an escargot's pace as travelers leap from rented Renaults to snap photos). In July and August you can see the harvest (sometimes still done by hand), visit distilleries (where flowers are transformed into essential oil), or take in a village festival. During the four-day Corso de la Lavande in Digne-les-Bains, the streets are sprayed with lavender water, leaving the town awash in the magical, summery scent. —Julie Mautner

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Sheer Beauty

With unparalleled wildlife viewing, rock climbing, and horseback riding, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park is unlike any other canyon in the world. The narrow opening, sheer walls, and startling depths entice visitors to hike the trails along the rim of the canyon or explore the vast wilderness some 2,722 feet below. Experienced kayakers can feel the thrill of the class V rapids running straight through the canyon.

Dune It

At the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, one of the country's newest national parks, visitors can ascend a 13,000-foot-high peak or try sandboarding: racing down massive sand dunes using custom-modified snowboards and skis.

Travel Back In Time

In western Colorado, visitors enjoy exploring the ancient cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde National Park, which chronicle more than 700 years of ancient Puebloan history. A favorite among park visitors is a stop at the magnificent 5,000-square-foot Cliff Palace, the largest cliff dwelling in North America.

Elevated Views

The iconic Rocky Mountain National Park offers breathtaking scenery, abundant wildlife, and hiking trails that allow visitors to enjoy the solitude of the path less traveled. With five campgrounds, 359 miles of hiking trails, and a number of crystal-clear alpine lakes, Rocky Mountain National Park is proof that Mother Nature is a perfectionist.

Bountiful Breckenridge

In Breckenridge, numerous outdoor activities, history, art, culture, and a flourishing dining scene combine to offer something for everyone. Enjoy the mountain air by hiking, biking, or riding horseback along the extensive trail system that includes historic pathways used long ago by miners searching for gold. You'll find a variety of trails from gentle paved paths to extreme mountain hikes. Take a stroll through the Breckenridge Arts District, which offers art workshops and guest artist facilities; or discover works from well-known artists while exploring numerous galleries throughout town. Indulge your senses with musical performances by the National Repertory Orchestra and the Breckenridge Music Festival Orchestra. A host of independent restaurants will tempt your taste buds with a variety of specialty dishes including Colorado farm-to-table, wild game, sushi, and more. Foodies will delight in taking a cooking class or touring the local craft brewery and distillery.

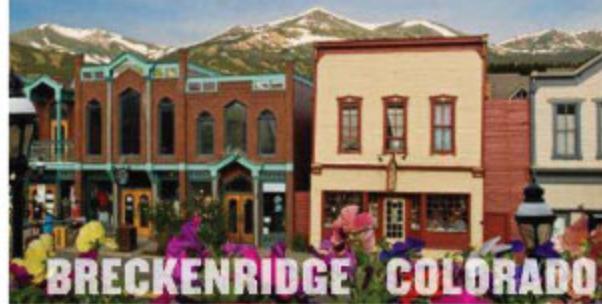
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BRECKENRIDGE COLORADO

Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum

The rich culture and heritage of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe—Colorado's longest continuous residents—take center stage at one of the state's newest museums located in the southwestern town of Ignacio. Opening in June of this year, the 52,000-square-foot cultural center and museum will feature interactive exhibits, archival photographs, video presentations, educational programs, and more than 1,500 artifacts, many of which have never before been publicly displayed. Step into the Welcome Gallery and be transported into a grand-scale tepee complete with an oversize fireplace, the four compass points inset on the floor, and a four-color Circle of Life skylight. You'll find an authentic 18-foot-diameter buffalo hide tepee in the museum's Permanent Gallery and a basket exhibit in the Temporary Gallery. Outside, stroll through the intricately designed herb gardens, which feature native trees, plants, grasses, and flowers. You can also visit the corral for horse demonstrations.

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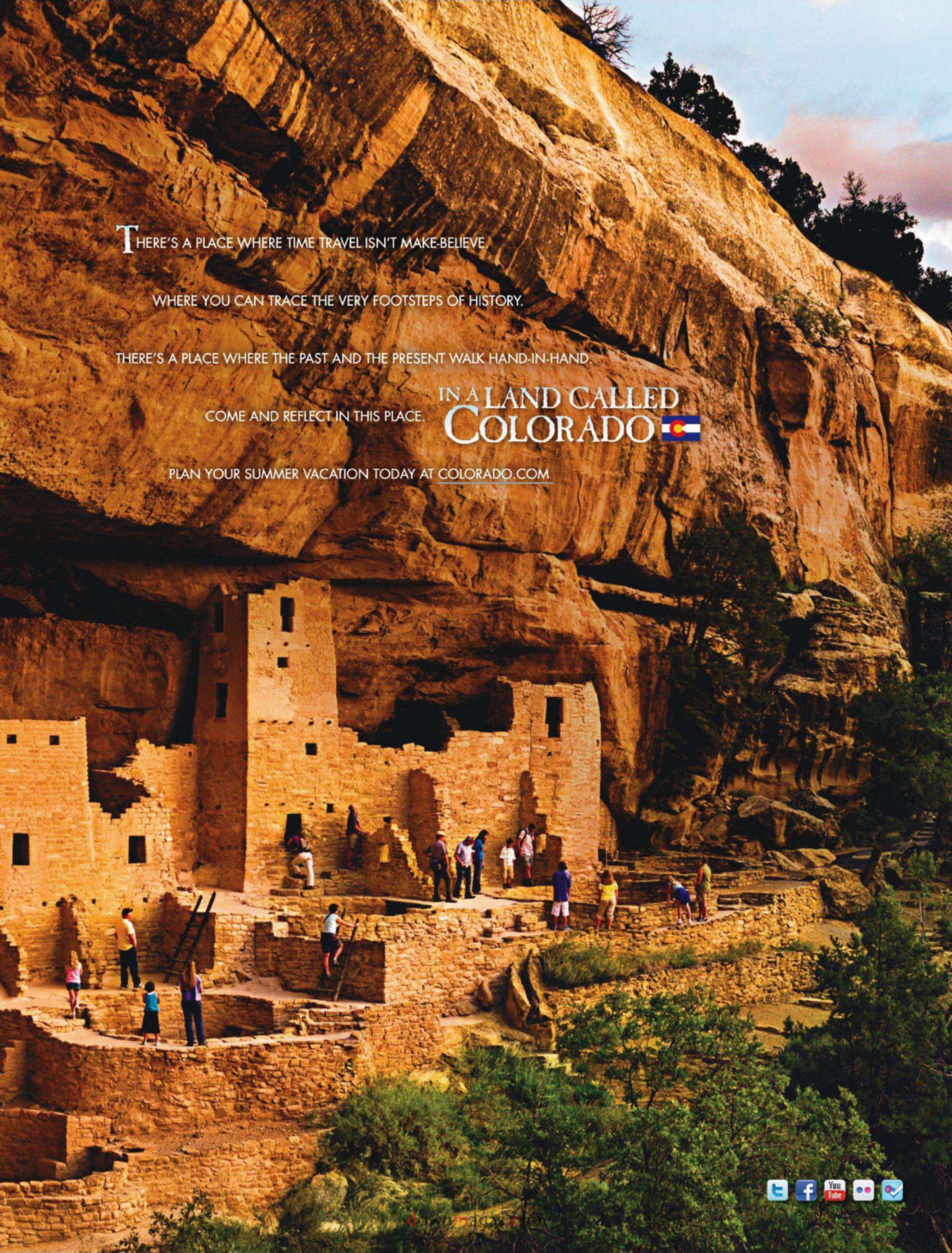
Cradled by Rocky Mountain National Park just 90 minutes from Denver, Estes Park offers the ultimate mountain adventure. From steep inclines to gentle paths, you'll find hiking, biking, and climbing trails to match every age and ability, including those for the physically challenged. Outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy world-class rock climbing, fly-fishing and white-water rafting, while cyclists will thrill at the challenge of taking on Trail Ridge Road, the highest continuous paved highway in North America, which runs from Estes Park through Rocky Mountain National Park to Grand Lake. Keep an eye out for the eagles, bugling elk, and bighorn sheep that make this area their home. In downtown Estes Park, you'll find one-of-a-kind shops and galleries, a pedestrian Riverwalk, and numerous bistros and sidewalk cafés. Local accommodations include secluded cabins, affordable lodges, riverside motels, luxury suites, and the historic Stanley Hotel.

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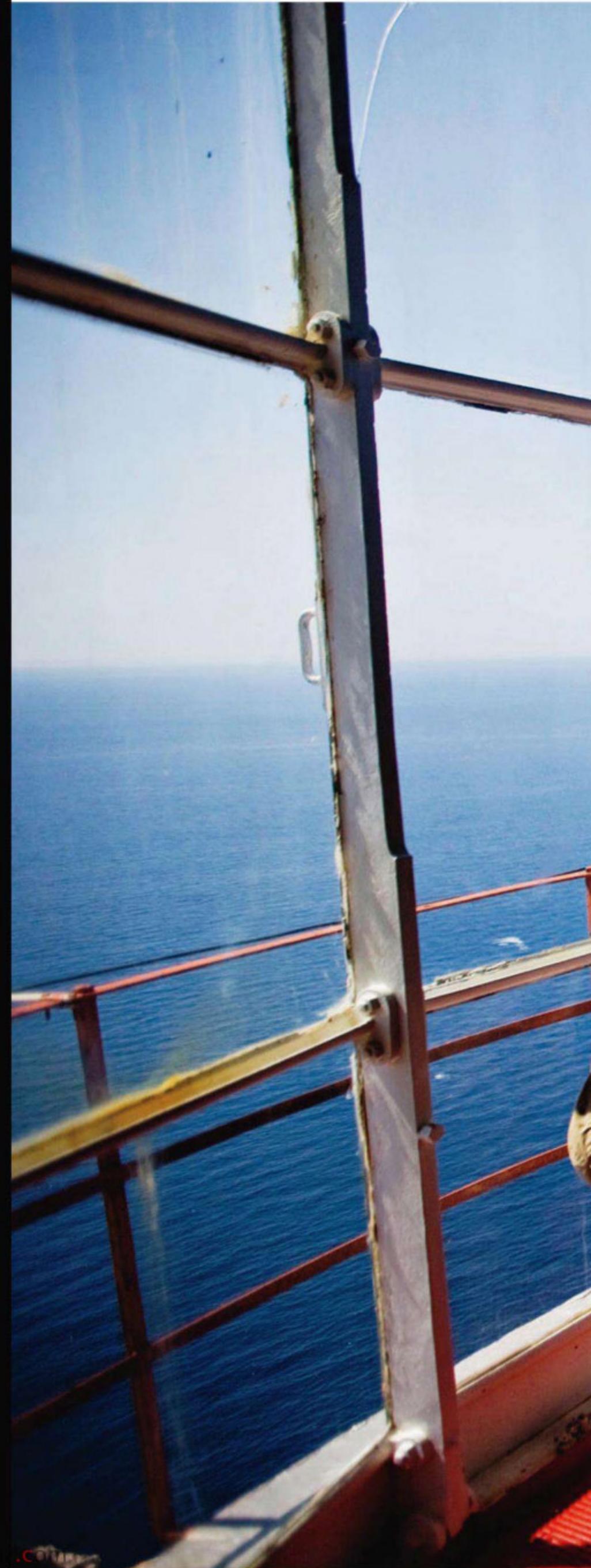


ALIGHT ON THE CROATIAN COAST

THE AUTHOR JOURNEYS TO A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD COMMUNITY, HOPING TO FIND A LIGHT-HOUSE TO CALL HIS OWN.



A beacon by night, a watchtower by day, the lonely lighthouse called Struga on Croatia's Lastovo Island obsesses the author (right) with its austere beauty and its keepers—Jure and Nada Kvinta—who share his family name.





BY PAUL KVINTA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY AARON HUEY



I'VE BEEN WARNED THAT, LIKE almost everyone living in Croatia's Dalmatian Islands, Jure Kvinta suffers from *pomalo*, a condition said to be so insidious, so overwhelming, so unstoppable, that it could undermine my entire mission. That would be tragic. I've come all the way to Croatia to find Jure, to conduct business of the utmost importance with him. Jure is the lighthouse keeper on Lastovo Island, one of the most far-flung and isolated of the Dalmatians. By all accounts, Lastovo is an enchanting little outpost, a place of limestone peaks and hidden inlets with just 600 people living in a medieval village surrounded by vineyards and olive groves.

The lighthouse itself is like something out of a fairy tale, I'm told, a majestic beacon perched on a 229-foot cliff overlooking the shimmering Adriatic. Jure's father kept the lighthouse, as did his father before him. Admittedly, I've become fairly obsessed with the structure ever since seeing a photo of it online. There are 48 Croatian lights scattered across the Adriatic, all built in the 19th century, each stunning and inspiring in its own way. But only the one on Lastovo has a connection to my decidedly obscure, Slavic last name—Kvinta. Given that there aren't that many Kvintas on the planet, my mission is simple: travel to Lastovo, meet Jure, determine if we're kin, and claim possible bragging rights to having a fabulous European lighthouse in my family.

The island town of Hvar, Croatia, population 3,600, one of the numerous waypoints on the writer's journey to Lastovo Island, is a ferry ride away from the mainland city of Split, which has an international airport. Hvar's 16th-century fortress overlooks a harbor (above) situated on historic trade routes of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. South of Hvar, off the coast of the uninhabited island of Sveti Klement, college students out for a sailing lesson take time to swim (right) in crystalline waters. "Travelers sail these islands on day tours as well as trips lasting a week," says photographer Aaron Huey.

BUT THE FULL implications of pomalo don't reveal themselves until halfway into my five-hour ferry ride from the mainland city of Split, when I notice that my fellow passengers can hardly keep their clothes on. By the time we reach Brac Island, the blonde to my left has discarded her sweater and is sunning herself in a lacy, push-up bra. By Hvar, the two hairy, middle-aged men to my right have abandoned their shirts and ordered more beer. By Korcula, the young guys behind me are down to their boxers and smoking a hookah pipe as big as a barber pole.

Things deteriorate from there.

When I can finally make out Lastovo in the distance, the push-up bra has disappeared completely, the hookah is making its way around the entire ship, and several crew members have joined the hairy guys in belting out a medley of Croatian folk songs.

"Pomalo," mutters the Italian grandmother seated next to me, shaking her head.

She spits out the word like an unexpected anchovy on a pizza. Pomalo, she explains, is an entrenched Dalmatian philosophy of life that suggests some combination of "easy," "slowly," "no problem," "maybe tomorrow," "relax," and "have another coffee." All of which is fine, Grandma concedes, unless you actually need to accomplish something. "I have a 400-year-old house on Korcula," she says. "It needs work. You think I can get these people to work on my house? Look at them. Mama mia! It is impossible!"

I'd been assured that Jure would meet me at the ferry terminal on Lastovo, but after all the passengers disembark and disperse, I'm left standing there alone with a suitcase in one hand and my passport in the other. I had entertained romantic notions of presenting my ID to Jure, of embracing him right there on the dock as my long-lost cousin. But he's nowhere in sight. I dig for my cell phone.

"Jure, this is Paul Kvinta."

"I cannot get you," he says, sounding like he's still waking from a nap. "Take a taxi."

"A taxi?" There are no taxis. There are no cars. I'd studied the map. The village is six miles from here, the lighthouse two miles beyond that. I look across the dusty road. There's the ferry office, a tiny grocery store, and the Lizard Lounge. That's it.

"I will call you a taxi," Jure says and hangs up.

Pomalo.

I lug my suitcase to the Lizard and wait.



THE CAB WINDS THROUGH pine forests and over hills until I finally glimpse the lighthouse rising alone at the end of a windswept peninsula. It seems the epitome of something Luka Bekic had told me the day before back on the mainland: "We are a seafaring country. We've been that for centuries."

Croatia has 1,244 islands sprinkled along its rocky coast, and Bekic, director of the International Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar, spends his time trolling their shores, recovering evidence of the maritime powers that have historically battled for control here: the Romans, Illyrians, Venetians, and others. "Even the Romans probably built some kind of lighthouses," Bekic explained, "maybe just metal baskets with fire." By the 19th century the Austro-Hungarian Empire had erected 48 proper lighthouses in the islands, locating them near strategic shipping lanes. Later, after Croatia declared its independence in 1991, the government refurbished several of the lighthouses and assigned them double-duty as inns. Today, island-hopping travelers can rent apartments in 11 Croatian lighthouses, including Jure's (see sidebar).

"Mr. Kvinta?" a woman inquires as I step from the taxi. She's leaning against the low stone wall encircling the lighthouse. She pronounces "Kvinta" not like I do (kuh-VIN-tuh) but like some of my relatives back in Texas: "Quinta."

"That's me," I say, handing her my passport.

She studies it.

"Yes, Quinta," she acknowledges and introduces herself as

Nada, Jure's wife. In broken English she explains that Jure should be back soon from errands. She has auburn hair, gentle eyes, and an inviting smile, and my heart warms at the thought that she might be family. I whip out my notebook and begin rifling questions. Is Jure's family originally from Croatia? How long have Kvintas been on Lastovo? Where...

Nada throws up both hands. "Easy, Quinta, easy," she protests. "Pomalo, pomalo."

"But..."

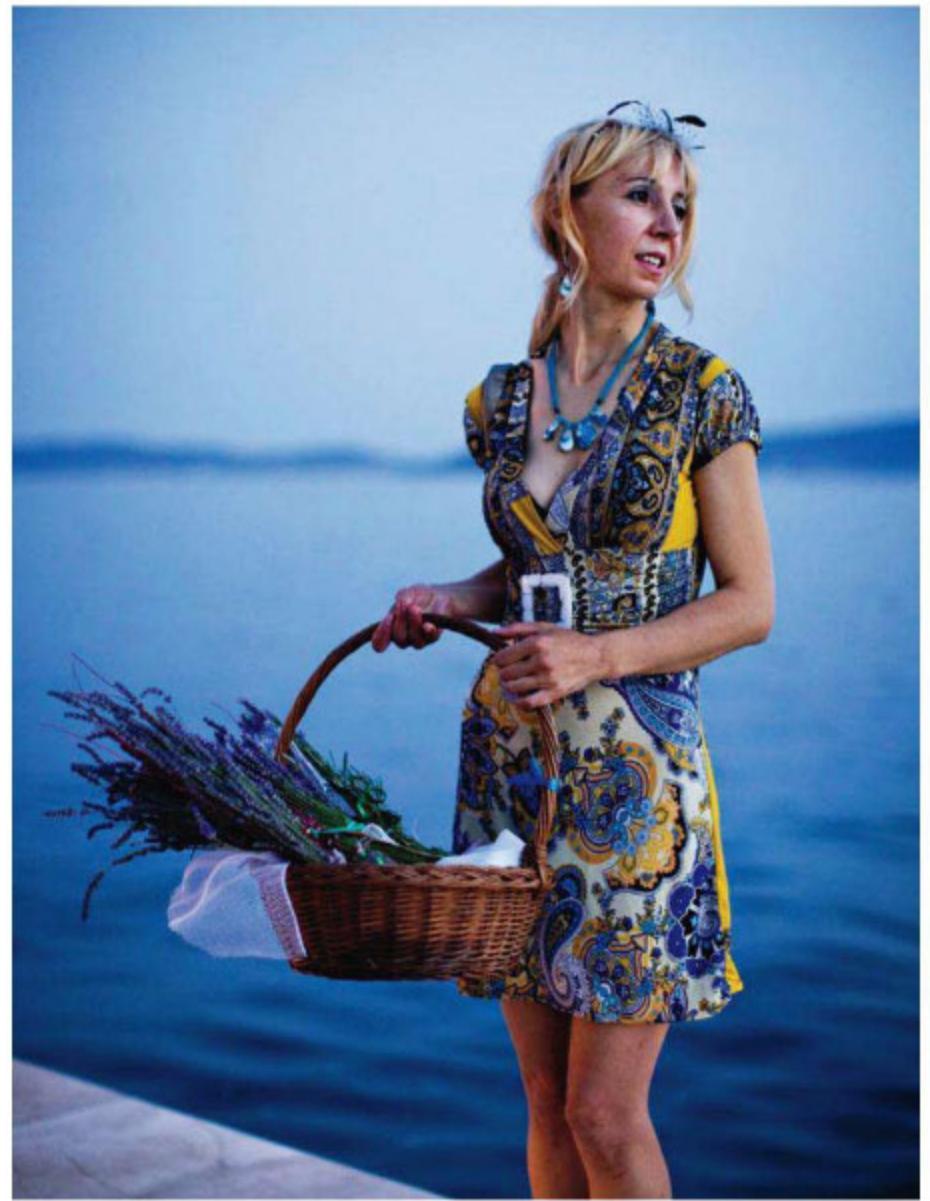
"No working!" she insists. "Coffee."

Their cottage sits in the shadow of the lighthouse, and we cross a patio to their front porch. On a picnic table Nada plunks down two coffee cups and two shot glasses. In the former she pours thick, black Turkish coffee. In the latter she pours rakija, a grape-fermented Adriatic liquor. Coffee and rakija. That's how they roll in the Dalmatians.

"Zivjeli!" she says, clinking glasses with me and downing the sweet nectar. We have some more. Then some more after that.

After several fortifying rounds, I wobble over to the lighthouse to see my apartment. The structure, built in 1839, consists of a single-story, whitewashed building with green shutters and a limestone tower rising from the roof. My apartment is reached via a dark and moody corridor, but the digs themselves are delightfully spacious and airy. I park my gear and climb 98 steps to the top of the tower, where I find a five-foot-tall, rotating glass lens and a





Above and left: Lavender and balloons delight the senses in Zadar, 96 miles up the mainland coast from Split. Opposite: Giving in to the lure of pomalo, the Dalmatian philosophy of taking it easy, the author, Paul Kvinta, at right, shares a toast with his hosts Jure and Nada Kvinta. The couple maintains Struga lighthouse on Lastovo Island.

mesmerizing view of the Adriatic. I look south, where there's no land for over a hundred miles between me and Italy's bootheel. I step onto a catwalk outside and, circling around, catch a bird's-eye view of Jure and Nada's life: their vegetable garden, the vats where they ferment rakija and wine from their own grapes, the table where Jure cleans his daily catch. On the patio, a torn fishing net waits to be mended. Their curly haired dog suns itself on the lighthouse steps. In the distance I spy a moped sputtering up the unpaved road. By the time I descend the tower, Jure is strolling through the front gate. I introduce myself.

"Yes, yes," he says. "You are Quinta, I know." Jure resembles a lion with a mane of wild curls, intense eyes, and several days of stubble.

"We might be related," I suggest, hopefully.

"Maybe," he says, eyeballing me. "There is plenty of time to discuss that. Have you had coffee?"

"Um, yes."

Nada pours us more coffee and rakija.

Sensing that we're not going to discuss genealogy anytime soon, I inquire about activities on the island. I'd heard about hiking, scuba diving, boating.

"You could take a nap," Jure suggests, lighting a cigarette.

"Yes, nap," Nada seconds. "This Robinson Crusoe place. Peaceful. You must relax. Later for working." She extends both hands in an Eastern meditative pose and closes her eyes. "Ommm."

"Yes," says Jure, exhaling. "You must relax."

I CHOOSE INSTEAD to explore Lastovo village, only to find that everyone is doing exactly what Jure and Nada are doing—drinking coffee and hanging out. In the cafés along Ulica Pjevor, clusters of old men laugh and talk animatedly with their hands. I order a cappuccino, and in no time I'm chatting with white-haired Luka Fulmizi, who tells me something mind-boggling. "My house is a thousand years old," he says. "We've been in it for 40 generations." Would I like to see it?

Soon Fulmizi and I are climbing the narrow stone streets of Lastovo, a vertical village set in a natural amphitheater, that, curiously, faces inland rather than toward the sea. Unlike other Dalmatian towns laid out proudly on seafront real estate—places like Split, Hvar, and Dubrovnik—Lastovo has hidden completely its churches, bell towers, and red-roofed villas from the scrutiny of passing ships. Fulmizi shrugs. "We were notorious pirates," he says. After the Venetians destroyed the then seaside Lastovo in 998 as punishment for its pirating ways, residents built a new village undetectable to the outside world. They then promptly resumed attacking Venetian ships.

Fulmizi's four-story home with its thick walls and gracious veranda was the third house built after the Venetian sacking. To underscore just how old that is, he leads me to the indoor well that provides his drinking water. There's a five-inch-deep groove in the lip of the well where ropes have worn down the stone, the result of ten centuries of hoisting water to the surface. "But why have water when we can have wine?" Fulmizi says, as we segue to

A Light Where You Can Lay Your Head

Most of Croatia's lighthouse inns are clustered in the southern Dalmatian Islands or near the northern Istrian Peninsula. They come in all flavors. Some are on islands, others on the mainland. Some have keepers. Some put you in ambling distance to resort towns with spas and fine dining, while others provide the full-on Gilligan experience: a teeny, uninhabited island smack-dab in nowhere. All rent by the week, from \$700 to \$1,400 (shorter stays are available off-season), and can be booked online at www.adriatica.net/lighthouses/lighthouses_en.htm.

PALAGRUDA

Built: 1875.

Location: Southern Dalmatia, Palagruza Island.

Number of apartments: Two. The most far-flung Dalmatian island, Palagruza towers out of the sea closer to Italy than Croatia, all vertical rock. The lighthouse, reachable only by quad-busting switchbacks, sits atop a knife-blade ridge that plunges 295 feet off both sides. The Greek hero Diomedes is said to be buried here; the only living soul you'll find is the lighthouse keeper.

PLOCICA

Built: 1887.

Location: Southern Dalmatia, Plocica Island.

Number of apartments: Two. This small, flat island has a commodity rare in the Adriatic: sand, which lines the shallow lagoon north of the lighthouse. Nobody lives on Plocica, but you can buy food from Ante Petkovic, the fisherman who pops over regularly from Korcula Island.

PORER

Built: 1833.

Location: Istria, Porer Island.

Number of apartments: Two. You can literally walk around this entire rock islet in less than two minutes, so if boredom sets in, give Captain Ivan Giotta a call. He'll boat you over to nearby Pula, the largest city on the Istrian Peninsula, or to Fenoliga Island to see the dinosaur tracks.

PRISNIJAK

Built: 1886.

Location: Central Dalmatia, Prisnjak Island.

Number of apartments: One. You're basically getting the whole island, what with no keeper, no inhabitants, and just



Climbing the Veli Rat light tower.

one apartment. Prisnjak is an islet off Murter Island, and the channel between the two runs thick with sea bass and bream. Catch dinner, grill it up, and enjoy the lighthouse's spacious stone terrace.

RT ZUB

Built: 1872.

Location: Istria, Lanterna Peninsula.

Number of apartments: One. Meander the pebble beaches of Tarska and Lunga Bays or drive into nearby Porec, a nearly 2,000-year-old, picture-perfect Mediterranean village. You'll find shopping and gourmet meals in town, as well

as the Euphrasian Basilica, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

SAVUDRIJA

Built: 1818.

Location: Istria, Savudrija Peninsula.

Number of apartments: One. The town of Savudrija offers the best sailboarding and the best prosciutto in Croatia. The lighthouse is also the country's oldest, as well as its northernmost, with Slovenia just a stone's throw away.

SVETI IVAN NA PUCINI

Built: 1853.

Location: Istria, Sveti Ivan Island.

Number of apartments: Two. The best lighthouse for a *Swiss Family Robinson* experience. The shallow waters are kid friendly, and the big rock slabs are fine perches for watching bottlenose dolphins and seabirds. As the most distant islet of an archipelago near the mainland, Sveti Ivan is isolated but not too isolated.

SVETI PETAR

Built: 1884.

Location: Southern Dalmatia, Sveti Petar Peninsula.

Number of apartments: One. Because this lighthouse has no keeper and just one apartment, you'd expect solitude. Forget it. The easy, 20-minute stroll to the restaurants and pubs of Makarska—a popular resort—works both ways. Tourists flock to the beautiful pebble beach outside your front door.

SUSAC

Built: 1878.

Location: Southern Dalmatia, Susac Island.

Number of Apartments: Two. Besides lush forests and rocky cliffs, on Susac you'll find solitude and lamb chops. The only residents here are two keepers, a shepherd, and 300 sheep. Goran Gospodnetic likes to grill, and his flock grazes on rosemary year-round.

VELI RAT

Built: 1849.

Location: Central Dalmatia, Dugi Otok Island.

Number of apartments: Two. With dense forests surrounding the lighthouse and two national parks nearby, Veli Rat is perfect for nature lovers. Its 131-foot tower, tallest in the group, offers sweeping views of the surrounding bays and nearby villages of Verunic and Polje.

—Paul Kvinta



his wine cellar. He pours me a glass of dry red from one of four stainless steel vats on a table. His grapes, he explains, come from the 1,500 vines he tends not far from the village.

"Jure makes his own wine, too," I tell him.

"Many people here do," Fulmizi says. "It is difficult to export; we are so isolated. We make it for ourselves." He takes a sip and adds: "We enjoy life."

Later, after we part ways, I seek more perspective by scrambling to the top of 1,368-foot Hum peak, Lastovo's highest point. From here I can see not only Jure's lighthouse but two others, just barely, one on Susac Island 20 miles to the west and one on Glavat, almost the same distance to the east. Both islands are even smaller than Lastovo and uninhabited. Gazing at these lighthouses and at the endless water in all directions I sense the isolation Fulmizi mentioned. I can see why folks here might be wary of energetic, overeager outsiders who can't sit still.

I decide to embrace pomalo.

This doesn't mean I cease all activities. In fact, over the next several days, I manage to scuba dive the site of a Roman shipwreck off Lastovo's northeast corner, where the seafloor at 90 feet is littered with amphorae, the ceramic vessels that Romans used to transport wine. I also take a boat to Glavat Island, a speck of land 150 yards wide, where the only residents are thousands of shrieking gulls that circle round and round the lighthouse like some eerie scene from Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

Lighthouses, many of which host overnighters, pepper the Dalmatian Coast (left). Pomalo colors the atmosphere in laid-back Split (below).



But mostly, I spend my time chilling with Jure and Nada at the lighthouse. We talk music. We talk soccer. Jure takes me fishing. Nada makes me exquisite meals from our catch: pan-fried bonito in olive oil, grilled lobster, octopus goulash, all washed down with bottomless glasses of wine. “Eat, Quinta!” Nada exhorts. “Eat!”

Slowly, bit by bit, some family history emerges. “It’s funny,” Jure says one afternoon while patching his net on the patio, a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth. “When my grandfather kept the lighthouse, this place was Italy. When my father was here, it was Yugoslavia. Now I am here, and it is Croatia. We have lived in three different countries, but we have not gone anywhere!”

Then, one evening at sunset, with a breeze coming off the sea and Nada’s specialty spread out before us—chilled tuna and vegetable antipasto salad—the information dam breaks. We’re well into our first bottle of red when my hosts suddenly produce a trove of books, family photos, ID cards, documents of every sort. One book mentions the name Kvinta on Lastovo as far back as the 1600s. Hmm. How do I square that with the fact that my great-grandfather came from what is today the Czech Republic, some 700 miles north of here?

“The Austro-Hungarian Empire included both Croatians and Czechs,” Jure says. “Maybe they moved about within the empire.”

Then Nada raises another complicating factor: What if Jure isn’t Slavic at all but Italian? It’s possible that his name really is Quinta, which is common in Italy. We’re stumped. Uncertain how to proceed, we start a second bottle.

I ask Jure for his story, and he launches into it, how he was the lighthouse keeper first on Palagruza Island, then Susac, then Lastovo; how he and Nada survived Serbian bombing runs; how they happily raised two children here at the lighthouse.

“Family,” Nada says, becoming misty-eyed.

“To family!” Jure toasts. “Zivjeli!”

By our third bottle the lighthouse is flashing its mighty beam across the dark sea, a bazillion stars are twinkling above, and Jure’s face has begun blurring into Nada’s. “Do you have children, Quinta?” Jure-Nada asks. There’s a little girl, I explain, in an orphanage; I’m trying to adopt her. Intrigued with this, Nada grabs my hand and begins reading my palm. Jure translates. “You will get your daughter, Quinta,” they tell me. “But wait. There’s more.” Nada carefully examines my creases and swirls. “You will have a son too. A biological son!”

“Zivjeli!”

According to my palm, there’s only one way this son can come into being. “You and your wife must come to the lighthouse,” says Jure-Nada. “We will lock you in there for ten days. The food we will pass through your window. Outside we will parade around the lighthouse and cheer you on: Go, Quinta, go!”

“Zivjeli!”

I hold on to the table, trying to digest this astonishing prediction and trying even harder to keep from falling into my salad. That’s when Nada, with eyes burning, thrusts her face within inches of mine and howls, “Quinta, come home!” She points at the lighthouse. “Come home to lighthouse, Quinta! Come home!”

We laugh. We cry. We haven’t a shred of proof that we’re related, and yet, via the mysteries of pomalo, Jure and Nada graciously accept me as family. As for the lighthouse, not only can I claim it, I can call it home.

Zivjeli!

Writer PAUL KVINTA is still waiting for the adoption of his daughter to go through—and looking forward to taking her to Lastovo. AARON HUEY photographed “Landscapes of My Father” in our March issue.





Struga lighthouse towers over 17-square-mile Lastovo Island. "It's out there all alone on the southern side of the island," says writer Paul Kvinta, "so serene and at peace with itself."

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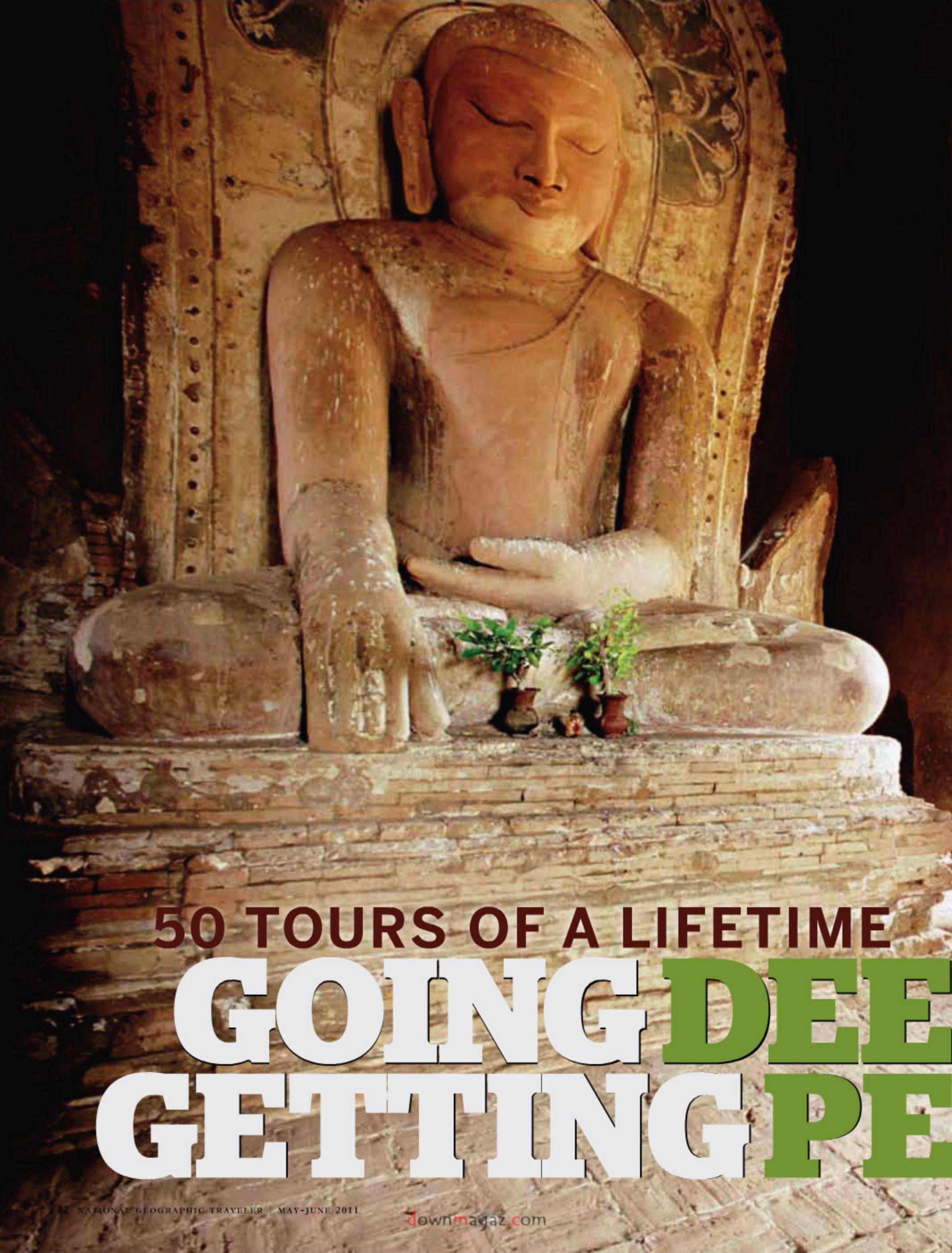


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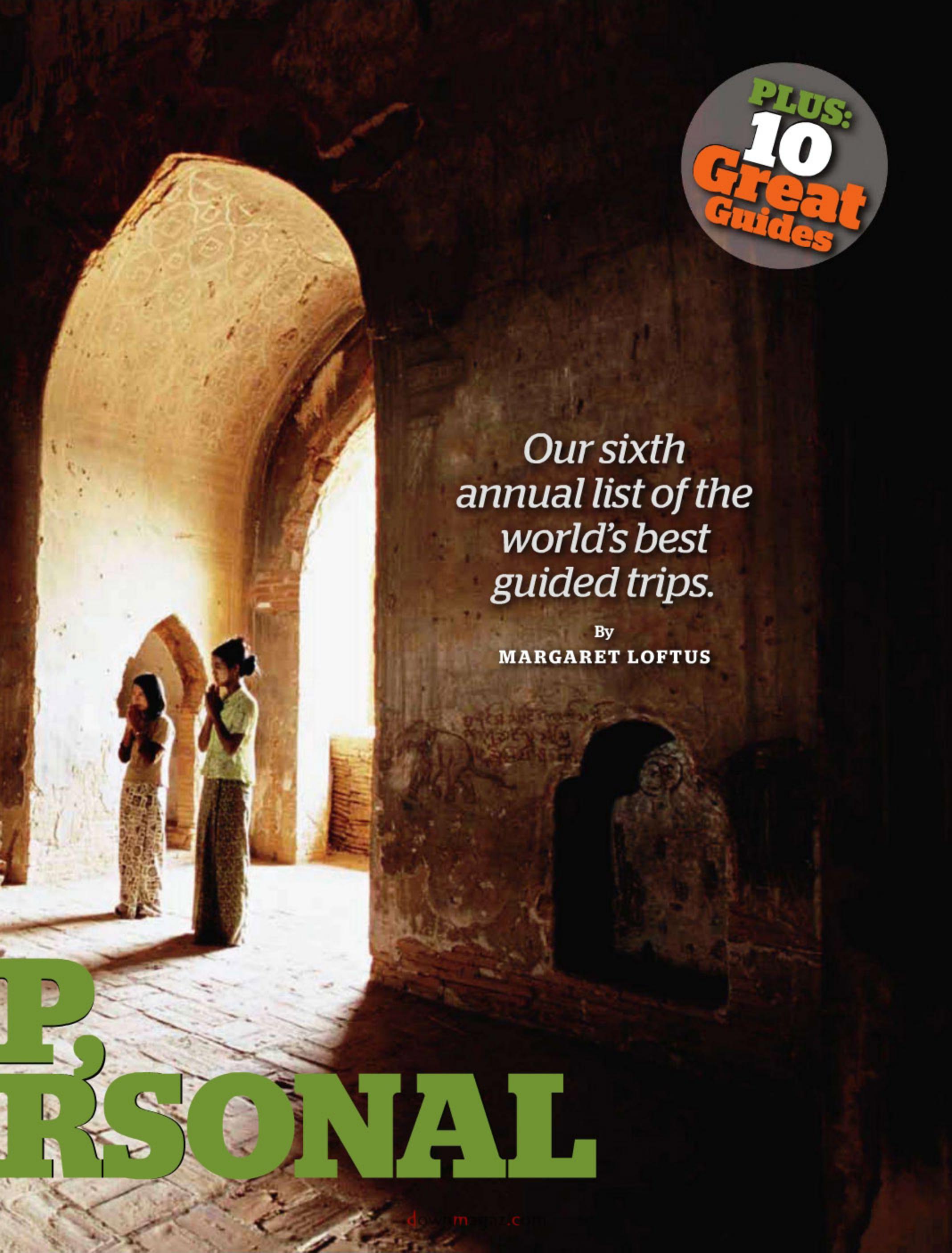
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50 TOURS OF A LIFETIME

GOING DEE GETTING PE



PLUS:
10
Great
Guides

*Our sixth
annual list of the
world's best
guided trips.*

By
MARGARET LOFTUS

UP PERSONAL

I travel is back. Operators report brisk sales and widening booking windows, which mean more travelers are committing to trips farther in advance rather than waiting for last-minute markdowns. New start-up companies are lighting up the Web like fireflies on a summer evening. But this isn't a return to the trophy travel of the early 2000s. According to a recent study, post-recession consumers want less luxury and more community. And outfitters are responding with trips that offer rich helpings of personal connection: You might sit around the campfire with Maasai warriors on your trek through the Serengeti or talk Taleggio with the cheesemaker on a culinary tour of northern Italy. ¶ Deepening and

enriching those experiences is the tour guide. Where once they held umbrellas aloft to keep their groups together and spouted historical facts like an encyclopedia, the best guides today are part friend, therapist, motivator, and concierge. And they still know their facts. (For ten that fit the bill, see page 89.) ¶ Clearly, people—locals, guides, and fellow travelers—are key factors in the best trips. "There's a yearning for genuine human interaction," says Shannon Stowell, president of the Adventure Travel Trade Association. Here are 50 tours from outfitters that get the human element.



AFRICA

TANZANIA

Serengeti Backcountry

Strike out in the Serengeti with one of the few outfits leading extended walking safaris in a rezoned and largely unexplored area of the park. Maasai warriors accompany some of the treks and share stories about their culture around the campfire. "We walked the hunting paths of lion prides and used elephant tracks to find wateringholes," says guest Michael Procknal. "I've never felt so in touch with the world around me." Digs are mobile tents, except for a night spent in a "tree nest." **Mark Thornton Safaris:** "Epic

Serengeti Bush Trek," 9 days; \$6,376; www.thorntonsafaris.com.

JORDAN, EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, SUDAN, ERITREA Red Sea Odyssey

Travel aboard the 110-passenger *Clipper Odyssey* to explore the most celebrated sites of the region—the rose-pink ruins of Petra in Jordan and Luxor temple in Egypt—as well as those places visitors rarely tread. See Sudan's old city of Suakin, a once thriving trading post with buildings carved from coral blocks; and the Dahlak Archipelago in Eritrea, where islanders fish for pearls as they have for centuries. **Zegrahm and Eco Expeditions:**

"Voyage through the Red Sea," 17 days; \$11,980; www.zeco.com. **N**

ZIMBABWE

Walk Among Elephants

After years of political turmoil, Zimbabwe is back on the radar for safarigoers, but this outfitter never left, working with local communities to conserve wildlife populations. Track the herds by jeep and on foot in Hwange National Park, known for its proliferation of elephants, rhinos, and lions, and glide past wading hippos on a two-night canoe trip in Mana Pools National Park. **Africa Adventure Company:** "Eyes on Elephant," 15 days; \$6,295; www.africa-adventure.com. **N**

SOUTH AFRICA, TANZANIA

Origins of Humanity

This expedition is like stepping into a National Geographic documentary. You're in the field with the paleoanthropologist who discovered the 3.2-million-year-old skeleton "Lucy," exploring early human prehistory where it all began. You'll visit the spot in Olduvai Gorge where another early hominid was found, study the similarities between chimpanzees and humans in Gombe National Park, and tour the fossil-rich Sterkfontein caves with a paleoanthropologist who'll discuss his work excavating what could be the oldest and most complete hominid. **National Geographic Expeditions:** "Human Origins," 15 days; \$13,475; www.nationalgeographicexpeditions.com.



Visit our website for photos, links, and more.
traveler.nationalgeographic.com/travel/tours

DAVID PAYNTER/PHOTOLIBRARY (LEFT), CLEMENS ENMLER/LAIF/REDUX (OPPOSITE), EZEQUIEL SCASSETTI/REPORTERS/REDUX (PREVIOUS PAGES)

EGYPT**Dive into History**

Retrace Alexander the Great's march through the Western Desert to the Oracle of Amun, where he was proclaimed a god and the pharaoh of Egypt. In the Siwa Oasis—housing a distinctive Berber culture—stay at Adrère Amellal, a modern eco take on the traditional Siwi thatch-and-mud home. Later, scuba dive in Alexandria's harbor for a look at the surreal, preserved ancient city discovered in 1994. **Ker & Downey:** "Uncovering Alexander's Egypt: A Desert & Diving Expedition," 14 days; \$9,870; www.kerdowney.com. **N**

BOTSWANA**Africa, Inside and Out**

A unique foray into the heart of Africa in two parts: Spend the first week embedded with the San community as young men prepare to hunt an antelope for a rite of passage that will initiate them as adults. Next, fly to Makgadikgadi Pans to ride quad bikes across the lunar expanse of a giant ancient lake bed toward Kubu Island, a granite rock sacred to the Kalahari Bushmen. **Trufflepig Travels:**

"Bushman Initiation Hunt & Kubu Island Quad Bike Safari," 15 days; \$17,825; www.trufflepig.com.

GHANA**Voodoo and Bush Camping**

The journey kicks off in the capital, Accra, then heads to Ghana's remote northern region. Meet traditional Lobi people, visit a witchcraft oracle, and pitch your tent in the bush. Green to the core, the outfitter often eschews hotels in favor of camping and uses alternative energy at its Toronto headquarters. **Gap Adventures:** "Ghana Untouched," 13 days; \$2,700 (some meals not included); www.gapadventures.com. **N V**

ASIA**SRI LANKA****Ceylon Rising**

Peace has finally come to Sri Lanka after a quarter century of intermittent civil war, making the island's pristine nature reserves and trove of cultural marvels more accessible than ever. A fourth-generation Tamil guide shows you what you've been missing: The ancient city of

Polonnaruwa with the massive carved Buddha images at Gal Vihara; the tropical modernist architecture of native son Geoffrey Bawa; and the former rebel stronghold of Trincomalee, prized for its strategic harbor and stunning beaches.

Remote Lands: "Sri Lanka Reborn in Peace," 7 days; \$3,600; www.remotelands.com. **N**

INDIA**Cats and Culture Combo**

One of ten special expeditions planned to commemorate the operator's 25th anniversary, this one-off itinerary with the company's founders is part tiger safari, led by leading conservationist Amit Sankhala, and part survey of Indian culture. You'll learn about Indian musical styles in Rajasthan and be welcomed into the home of a family in the Blue City of Jodhpur for lunch. **Wildland Adventures:** "Tigers and Travels Through India," 18 days; \$5,995; www.wildland.com. **N**

CHINA**Old-World Tradition**

This insider tour is an immersion into a rural culture that's fast disappearing, from

SERE SANDS Ker & Downey takes travelers to Egypt's White Desert to view limestone formations (below). In Zimbabwe, track herds of elephants with Africa Adventure Company (opposite). Opening pages: Buddhist temples in Bagan are stops on a biking trip in Myanmar with Butterfield & Robinson.





NOBLE TRUTHS The Borobudur Buddhist temple in Java is one stop on a cultural tour of Indonesia offered by Journeys International.

the traditional peoples of Longsheng, known for their longevity, to the Huizhou-style houses of Nanping, built in the Ming and Qing dynasties. **Big Five:** "China: Captivating Visions & Timeless Horizons," 15 days; \$5,490; www.bigfive.com.

MYANMAR

Biking Burma

Biking is a way of life in Myanmar and undoubtedly the best way to soak up its lush countryside and encounter the gracious Burmese people. Pedal through ancient villages that seem right out of an Indiana Jones movie, stopping to visit hillside temples and meet with artisans such as traditional silk weavers and lacquerware craftsmen. A river cruise down the Ayeyarwady, lined with stupas, monasteries, and nunneries, provides a respite.

Butterfield & Robinson: "Myanmar Biking," 9 days; \$7,495; www.butterfield.com.

CHINA, NEPAL

Capturing the Himalaya

Chase the light with nature photographer Lewis Kemper on this overland journey from Tibet's "forbidden city" of Lhasa to Everest Base Camp. Along the way, Kemper shares his tips on how

best to shoot the lively bazaars, timeless monasteries, colorful prayer flags, and majestic peaks. **Destination Himalaya:** "Photographer's Tibet: To the Roof of the World," 16 days; \$5,400; www.destination-himalaya.net.

VIETNAM

Kid-Friendly Orient

Bookended by Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, this private family excursion is action-packed with quintessential Vietnamese experiences. Trek in bio-diverse Hoang Lien National Park, meet members of the Zay hill tribes in the Black Hmong villages, cruise through the limestone peaks of Halong Bay, and dine with descendants of the royal family in Hue. **Horizon & Co.:** "Vietnam Family Adventure," 14 days; \$3,598; www.horizon-co.com. **N F**

PAKISTAN

Hindu Kush Adventure

British writer turned tour operator Jonny Bealby began taking intrepid travelers to Pakistan nearly ten years ago after living with the indigenous Kalash, a pagan community in the Hindu Kush. He returns every year to guide what has

become his company's signature trip, from Islamabad northwest to Chitral and the Kalash villages, to the spectacular mountainscapes of Shandur Pass, Hunza, and Skardu. Geraldine Sharpe Newton, who has traveled with the outfitter eight times, says, "It's very humbling to see people who lead their lives so detached from ours—and with so much less." **Wild Frontiers Adventure Travel:** "Hindu Kush Adventure," 17 days; \$3,195; www.wildfrontiers.co.uk. **V**

THAILAND

Lending a Hand

Known to travelers for its beaches, Phuket is also home to some of the country's neediest children, many of whom lost parents in the 2004 tsunami. Spend a day pitching in at a school near Kuraburi where they learn life skills. Then stay with a local family in Ban Talae Nok to see how the community is developing artisan cooperatives as a means of recovery. Finally, head north to the rolling hills of Chiang Mai for a hike through the countryside to visit hill tribes. **Planeterra Foundation:** "Volunteer with Children in Phuket," 13 days; \$1,249; www.planeterra.org. **N V S**

RUSSIA

Siberian White Water

Join Russian river pro Vladimir Gavrilov for this 166-mile white-water expedition on the Kaa-Khem River—the Motherland's version of the Middle Fork of the Salmon—deep in Siberia's Sayany Region. Raft class III to IV rapids by day, camp in the taiga forest by night, and brace yourself for the Mel'zeyskiy Cascade, a section of river ten miles long with more than 30 rapids. **ECHO River**

Trips: "Rafting Siberia's Kaa-Khem River," 15 days; \$5,660; www.echotrips.com. **N C**

MONGOLIA

Climbing the Steppes

While you might cover more of Mongolia's vast landscape in a jeep, traveling on foot makes for a far richer experience. This trek, led by Australian adventurer and writer Tim Cope and accompanied by Mongolian artist Tseren Enebish, follows the migratory route of the nomadic Khotont people in the glacier-capped Kharkhira and Tsaaist Uul mountains—refuge of the elusive snow leopard. **World Expeditions:** "Mongolia in the Footsteps of the Nomad," 18 days; \$4,560; www.worldexpeditions.com.

INDONESIA

Sumatra Quest

True to its name, the outfitter offers trips that are heavier on culture shock than coddling. Enter the island of Sumatra, where you'll stay in a traditional Batak Karo village, climb the active Sibayak Volcano, and camp among the orangutans in the rain forest of Gunung Leuser National Park. Spend two days in Banda Aceh, an area recovering from civil war and devastation by the 2004 tsunami; at a nonprofit learning center, you can help local kids practice their English. **Intrepid Travel:** "Sumatran Highlights," 15 days; \$1,825; www.intrepidtravel.com. **N V S**

LEBANON, SYRIA

Western Civ Survey

Stomping grounds of successive groups of Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, and Ottomans, Lebanon and Syria are littered with the ruins of structures built by former rulers. This operator has curated a collection of the most intriguing sites, from the ancient city of Palmyra to the Roman temples of Baalbek, for a private driving tour that lets you soak up the splendor at your own pace. Diversions include a tour of Aleppo and a visit to Chateau Ksara, Lebanon's oldest



TIGER, TIGER Seeing the big cat is a highlight of this India safari with Wildland Adventures.

operating winery and a legacy of the Phoenicians, one of the oldest wine cultures in the world. **Cox & Kings:** "Empires Past," 13 days; \$6,795; www.coxandkingsusa.com.

INDONESIA

Beyond Bali

Most visitors to Indonesia never venture past Bali. This itinerary shows off what they've been missing in the rest of this richly diverse country, including a three-day stint aboard a schooner scouting for dragons around Komodo island; watching the sun rise at the Borobudur temple archaeological site; and a visit to

Prambanan, one of the grandest Hindu temples in Southeast Asia. **Journeys International:** "Adventures with Apes, Arts & Dragons," 12 days; \$4,475; www.journeys.travel.

CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

GUYANA

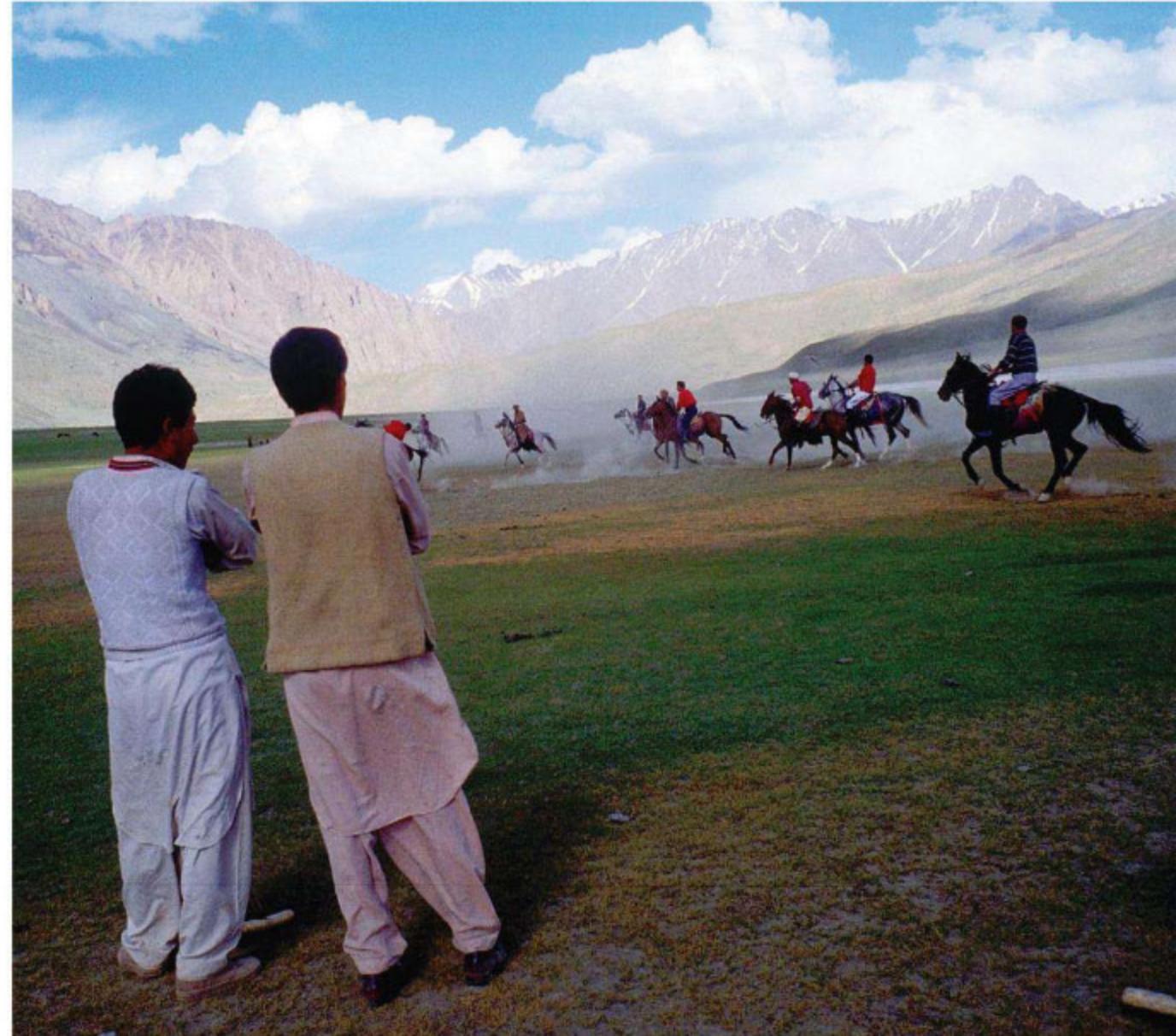
Behind the Guiana Shield

Most Guyanese live on the coast, leaving the country's interior largely untouched. Travel deep into the remote Guiana Shield via small plane, canoe, 4x4 pickup truck, and the occasional bullock cart to discover one of the last unspoiled rain forests on Earth. You'll stay at Amerindian-owned lodges along the way and experience indigenous culture. **Wilderness Explorers:** "Amerindian Guyana," 16 days; \$4,236; www.wilderness-explorers.com. **N**

ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, URUGUAY

Tour del Sur

Pack your bike, sleeping bag, and stamina for this more-than-a-month-long cycling tour. Ride through lush coastal islands, the Juréia rain forest reserve,



MOUNTAIN POLO Wild Frontiers Adventure Travel guides guests into Pakistan's Hindu Kush to watch polo matches such as this one in the Shandur Pass and meet villagers from Kalash communities.

Circuito Vale Europeu (Brazil's first official bike-touring route), and the mountains of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. You'll stop at Florianópolis, Porto Alegre, and Montevideo—cities with many cycling aficionados. **Tour d'Afrique:** "Samba Tango Bicycle Expedition: Rio de Janeiro to Buenos Aires," 36 days; \$3,900; www.tourdafrique.com. V C

BELIZE, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS

The Maya Kings

Scholars have a better understanding of the way the ancient Maya lived, thanks

to recent breakthroughs in deciphering Maya script. However, the reasons for the civilization's collapse remain a mystery. Join expert David Drew for an archaeological survey of this lost civilization, from the hieroglyphic-inscribed monuments of Copán to the remote jungle ruins of Lamanai. Last year, the operator funded a project to train a local in pottery reconstruction to help maintain a small museum dedicated to the ruins' artifacts. **Andante Travels:** "The Maya in Guatemala and Belize," 15 days; \$5,395; www.andantetravels.co.uk.



STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN On an Andante Travels tour of Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras, participants can climb steep stairs up a Maya temple at the UNESCO World Heritage site Tikal.

ECUADOR

Galápagos Land and Sea

The best way to explore the famed archipelago that sparked Darwin's theory of evolution is the way the eminent naturalist himself did it: by land and sea. Spend the first half of the tour hiking and kayaking the volcanic islands for up-close looks at giant tortoises, blue-footed boobies, and other endemic species. Next, board a 20-passenger yacht to cruise the rugged shoreline in search of sea lion harems and primeval lava landscapes. **Southern Explorations:** "Galápagos Supreme," 12 days; \$4,895; www.southernexplorations.com. F

PERU

Saddle Up for the Inca Trail

Machu Picchu has been one of the world's top tourist draws since American historian Hiram Bingham brought it to our attention exactly one hundred years ago this July. But few reach the Inca trail on horseback. This ride takes you through 15 different biozones, starting in the foothills of the snowcapped Salcantay Mountain and stopping at small lodges along the way. The highlight is a private guided tour of the lost city. **Mountain Lodges of Peru:** "Lodge-to-Lodge Ride to Machu Picchu," 7 days; \$2,950; www.mountainlodgesofperu.com. N

COLOMBIA

Lost and Found City

Surrounded by the dense jungle of northern Colombia, Ciudad Perdida was built by the Tayrona some 600 years before Machu Picchu. It was lost to the modern world until the mid-1970s, when archaeologists learned of its existence after ancient ceramic urns and other looted treasure began to appear on the black market. Getting there requires a rigorous, three-day trek through thick vegetation, waist-high rivers, and a final ascent up 1,200 moss-covered steps. Sleep in hammocks and bathe in rivers. **Adventure Associates:** "The Lost City, Journey to the 10th Century in Colombia," 7 days; \$1,390; www.adventure-associates.com. N V

ARGENTINA, CHILE

Patagonia Adventure

Few things are as thrilling as riding cross-country on a motorcycle with nothing between you and your surroundings. With the dramatic geography of Patagonia as your backdrop, this road trip—from the heart of the Lake District, across the Andes, and into Tierra del

10 GUIDES WHO MAKE THE TRIP



THE RENAISSANCE MAN

Roberto Strippoli

A native of Puglia, Strippoli is a font of Italian history. In the off-season, he focuses on his culinary and sommelier studies. He is a multi-sport guide for Backroads.

A favorite spot is the little 14th-century Cetrella church going up from Anacapri to Monte Solaro. It's a beautiful piece of architecture with balconies that face the Gulf of Naples, and guests just love it. The view, the nature, the colors—that's the essence of the Amalfi coast. It's a great example of integration of architecture and landscape. And it demonstrates how clever those Christian mystics and hermits really were.



THE CHIEF

Kennedy Omwenga

A safari director for Micato Safaris, Omwenga grew up tending goats in the western highlands of Kenya, where he returns at times to serve as a Kisii tribal chief.

My hope is for guests to connect with the local people so that they can understand the diversity of our cultures and appreciate how different our lives are compared to most Americans' lives. At the same time, I show that we're more alike than they may think. We all hope for a better future for our children, for a cleaner planet, and for peace. Also, many travelers are surprised to learn that some Kisii people have Facebook pages, even though they still live in the traditional way.



THE TRACKER

Nic Polenakis

Polenakis, an independent guide for Africa Adventure Company, was born in Zimbabwe and is specially trained to lead walking safaris.

I often sit for hours in anticipation of a kill and will analyze and investigate every fresh leopard track, rhino dung midden, steaming elephant dropping, buffalo wallow, lion roar, or any clue to the whereabouts of the animals. However, I just as passionately explain African culture and history, seek birds, insects, and reptiles; identify trees, grasses, and shrubs; and discuss everything else to do with conservation and ecotourism. To me it's all about revealing the big picture and not necessarily only the Big Five.

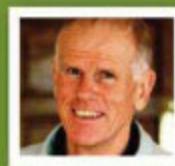


THE FATHER AND SON

Alfredo and Joaquin Meneses

Alfredo, an independent guide in Ecuador for Southern Explorations and other outfitters, is an expert kayaker, completing more than 50 river descents. Joaquin often joins his father on family itineraries.

One of our guides dislocated a shoulder on the Jatunyacu River. It looked bad. Suddenly an Indian woman appeared as if from nowhere. She picked up a stone, smashed some plants, and rubbed them on him, then took his arm, and with the most gentle movement, put it back in place. This is the kind of thing we see in the jungle. **Joaquin:** I make friends with the kids on the trip and show them things my dad taught me.



THE LEGEND

Peter Hillary

Hillary, an expedition leader and expert for National Geographic Expeditions, first climbed Mount Everest in 1990, 37 years after his father, Edmund, made the first ascent with Tenzing Norgay.

I have a genuine love for the journeys upon which I am embarking and I get pleasure out of sharing it with other people. My favorites are unquestionably the Himalaya (they're almost like a second home) and Antarctica. They are contrasting worlds, one brimming with life and people and the other an ice-age wilderness.



THE COACH

Lel Tone

Tone grew up in Switzerland and began skiing in the Alps when she was just two years old. She is a heli-skiing guide in Alaska for EpicQuest.

Alaska is immense and beautiful. Often this combination is overwhelming and intimidating. Over the years, I've found it's important to be all guide and part counselor. It is important to be aware and have compassion. There is nothing better than seeing the joy in a smile of someone who just skied a line they thought they couldn't or pushed through fears or lack of confidence, something that brought them to the edge of their comfort zone.



THE VETERAN

Annie Dowling

A cultural guide in India and China for Tauck, Dowling once worked with refugees in Asia.

In China, I get the guests up early so we are the first ones into Pit Number 1 at the Museum of the Terra Cotta Warriors and Horses. We stand in absolute quiet with the figures offering mute testimony to Emperor Qin's megalomania. In India, I love taking guests to Varanasi. Picture the evening ceremonies: the drama at the Manikarnika cremation ground, the faithful bathing and worshiping the sun, the golden light on the stone mansions along the ghats. It's colorful, magical, and soul-stirring.



THE SISTERS

Monica and Maria Elena Malpezzi Price

The siblings grew up in the bike touring business and bought Experience Plus! Bicycle Tours from their parents.

Some guests aren't comfortable talking to strangers, especially if they don't speak the same language. I love to be the catalyst in connecting guests with locals in Italy. Ultimately, the more we all communicate, the more we understand about the world. **Maria Elena:** It's important to be intuitive to people's needs and know how to juggle the individual and the group experience, so guests can relax while being encouraged to join in the fun and camaraderie.



GOURMAND'S DELIGHT **Dine and hike through the northern Italian countryside, stopping at towns such as Orta San Giulio, with Wilderness Travel.**

Fuego—ups the ante. It's *Motorcycle Diaries*, only more comfy. You'll stop for a boat cruise along the Moreno Glacier, camp in Torres del Paine National Park, dig into traditional asados (Argentine barbecue meat fests), and overnight at local farmhouses. **Compass Expeditions:** "Patagonia Explorer," 18 days; \$7,290; www.compassexpeditions.com. **C**

EUROPE

AUSTRIA, GERMANY, HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA

Cycle the Danube

Wending through the heartland of Eastern Europe past medieval towns, Roman ruins, historic bridges, and sweeping alpine vistas, the nearly 2,000-mile-long Danube River has long held an allure for cyclists. Unlike most supported rides, this one extends the well-trod Passau to Vienna route; you'll go from Regensburg, the northernmost bend in the river, to Budapest. Cyclists pedal at their own pace, regrouping at points of interest and in the evenings to share their experiences. Past guest Linda Myers likes the local focus. "We ate at neighborhood restaurants and interacted with residents." **ExperiencePlus!**

Bicycle Tours: "Bicycling the Danube," 13 days; \$4,600; www.experienceplus.com.

ITALY

Hike, Make Pasta, Eat

Feast your way through northern Italy's Piedmont, Lombardy, and Veneto regions—think tangy goat cheeses, creamy risottos, Barolo and Barbaresco wines—priming your appetite with day hikes and visits with vintners and cheesemakers along the way. The best part? Two nights at Verona's luxe Villa del Quar, where the chef shares his pastamaking prowess in a cooking lesson before dinner at the hotel's Michelin-starred Ristorante Arquade. **Wilderness Travel:** "Great Hikes and Chefs of Northern Italy's Gourmet Trail," 8 days; \$5,295; www.wildernesstravel.com. **N**

UNITED KINGDOM

Paddling the Wild West

With its rugged nooks and crannies, Scotland's sparsely populated western coast is prime paddling country. This guided trip shows off the highlights of the 300-mile Scottish Sea Kayak Trail, from Loch Linnhe to the beach-fringed

islands of the Sound of Arisaig, teeming with seals, otters, dolphins, minke whales, and basking sharks. Stay at inns right off the trail. **Wilderness Scotland:** "The Scottish Sea Kayak Trail," 6 days; \$1,250; www.wildnessscotland.com. **N V**

SPAIN, MOROCCO

Moorish Delights

From Granada's 14th-century Alhambra palace and Arabic tearooms to the vibrant Djemaa el Fna town square and Dar Si Said Museum in Marrakech, this private tour threads together Spain and Morocco's shared Moorish heritage. Lodgings are luxe, with stays at the elegant Alma Palacio de Villapanés in Seville and Kasbah Tamadot, Virgin founder Richard Branson's retreat in the Atlas Mountains. **Artisans of Leisure:** "Southern Spain & Morocco," 14 days; \$13,295; www.artisansonleisure.com.

BULGARIA

Mountain Romp

Carved by deep river gorges and riddled with vast networks of caves, southern Bulgaria's Rhodopes mountain range is

Found! The Last Morgan Silver Dollars

Amazing Discovery from Montana Silver Collector

Montana. A old-time silver collector recently liquidated a hoard of Morgan Silver Dollars he'd acquired that were part of an estate sale. They'd been hidden away for decades—originally purchased from the U.S. Treasury.

Now these glittering chunks of nearly uncirculated silver history have been added to our inventory and are being released to the public by [GovMint.com](#). While they last, you can acquire these brilliant, lustrous silver coins for as low as \$42.45 apiece. Twenty-coin Bankers rolls and 10-coin Half Rolls are available.

Survival Against All Odds

By all rights these silver dollars should have been destroyed decades ago. Government silver melt-downs, including the 1918 Pittman Act, which alone destroyed 270 million Morgans, have decimated supplies. Millions more were called in by the government and melted for their silver content between 1921 and 1965. Today private hoards account for virtually all the surviving coins. And of those, only a fraction survive in the Virtually Uncirculated condition so coveted by collectors.

Prized Last Year Coins

These last year 90% pure silver beauties still dazzle with their Mint luster and heft. Weighing in at 26.73 grams and a diameter of 38.1 mm, they are the largest American silver coins ever to circulate. Struck from silver mined from the western Mother Lode, they are the legendary coins that built the West. Master engraver George T. Morgan fashioned a radiant profile of Lady Liberty and a majestic eagle as symbols of our nation's strength and prosperity. Today, the long-gone Morgan silver dollars are among the most sought-after coins in America.

Hot Silver Market, Hot Silver Value

Silver prices have jumped over 140% in the last two years fueling the frenzy among avid collectors, investors, and the 130 million new collectors created by the U.S. Mint's highly successful state quarters program.

Today, the market is hot for Silver coins in any condition. This same 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar currently sells elsewhere in the same grade condition for \$52 apiece. But while supplies last you can get this original Virtually Uncirculated 1921 Silver Morgan for as little as \$42.45 each, in quantity!

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Past performance is not an indicator of future performance.



a wonderland for hiking, rock climbing, horseback riding, and spelunking. Do it all on this multisport family adventure, including a trek into the forested Chairite Reserve, where you'll set up camp for the night and sleep under the stars. **KE Adventure:** "High Jinks in Bulgaria," 8 days; \$1,475 for adults; \$815 children, ages 6-11; www.keaadventure.com. **V F**

CROATIA

Retro Med

Vintage coastal trading boats once delivered supplies to the islands off Croatia's 1,100-mile coastline. Repurposed to accommodate guests, these 20- to 40-passenger vessels now ply the Adriatic at a more leisurely pace. Stop at medieval walled towns, orange-roofed fishing villages, vineyards, and pebbly white beaches or savor the classic Med scenery at anchor. **Maris Freight & Specialty Cruises:** "Croatia's Coastal Voyages," 7 days; \$515-\$1,140; www.freightercruises.com. **V**

FRANCE, ITALY

Bike the Isles

Trace the coastlines of northern Sardinia and western Corsica on a bike, discovering their dazzling land- and seascapes and distinct cultures. Warm up in Sardinia, often compared to northern California without the cars, where you'll coast down rolling hills and explore Bronze Age towers called *nuraghi*. Corsica brings more challenging terrain as you zigzag up cork tree-lined lanes to granite overlooks with sweeping views. **Ciclismo Classico:** "Mediterranean Island Hopping," 11 days; \$4,995; www.ciclismoclassico.com.

RUSSIA

Russia, Off the Radar

Inspired by the Romanovs' forays into rural Russia aboard their imperial river yacht in the late 19th century, this cruise on the 115-passenger *Volga Dream* plies the same waterways to explore parts of the country rarely visited by foreigners. Not up on your Tsarist history? Russia scholar Rosamund Bartlett lectures daily on subjects ranging from serfdom to Shostakovich's seventh symphony. **Exeter International:** "Moscow to Astrakhan, Lower Volga Cruise," 13 days; \$3,200; www.exeterinternational.com. **V**

SWITZERLAND

Swiss Ride

Led by a couple of American expats who've spent the last ten years map-

ping out the best descents and trails in Switzerland's Valais region, this mountain biking adventure promises peak thrills with breaks to soak up the local flavors. Learn the basics of winemaking in private tastings; visit fromagers; and forage for mushrooms. **EpicQuest:** "Rhone Valley Fall Harvest Mountain Biking Adventure," 8 days; \$5,500; www.epicquest.com.

GREENLAND, ICELAND, NORWAY

Arctic Triple Play

Explore three different regions of the Arctic aboard a 107-passenger research vessel: Tour Heimaey in Iceland's West-

a family in Kazbegi at the foot of one of the highest peaks of the Caucasus. **MIR Corporation:** "Eastern Turkey and Georgia: Legacy of Empire," 15 days; \$5,895; www.mircorp.com. **N**

NORTH AMERICA

UNITED STATES

Blue vs. Gray

As the United States begins a four-year commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, legions of travelers will visit the battlefields. Assemble in Gettysburg with historians and interpreters who will guide you through the



GREAT GORGE O.A.R.S. leads a rafting trip down the mighty Colorado River, from Lees Ferry to Lake Mead. At stops along the way, travelers hike areas of the Grand Canyon such as the Kaibab Trail.

man Islands, known for its occupation by Barbary pirates in the 17th century; ply the rugged coast of eastern Greenland in Zodiacs to see the largest fjord complex in the world; marvel at the Monaco Glacier and keep an eye out for polar bears and walrus in Spitsbergen. **Quark Expeditions:** "Three Arctic Islands: Triple the Adventure," 15 days; \$4,790-\$8,990; www.quarkexpeditions.com.

GEORGIA, TURKEY

Cultural Caucasus

With 25 years of guiding experience in the Caucasus region, the operator delivers a fresh cultural itinerary from the Anatolian Plateau of eastern Turkey to the Black Sea coast of Georgia. Visit the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Sumela, built into a steep cliff in the Pontic Mountains. Hear the polyphonic choral music of Adjara. Lunch at the home of

places and events in the mid-Atlantic that led up to the hostilities, most notably abolitionist John Brown's historic raid at Harper's Ferry. Learn about the war's early campaigns, including the Battle of Antietam, which had more than 23,000 casualties, distinguishing it as the bloodiest one-day battle in American history.

Civil War Tours: "The First Years of the Civil War," 5 days; \$812 (based on a group size of 15); www.civilwartours.net. **V**

MEXICO

Deep in the Canyon

Reaching the indigenous Tarahumara in Mexico's Copper Canyon can involve a train ride on the Chihuahua al Pacifico and a rugged five-day hike through the Sierra Madre. Your reward is joining several traditional communities, some of whom live in caves and under cliff overhangs in the Copper Canyon much the

way their ancestors did. Also celebrate a unique version of Holy Week, with colorful processions and ritual dancing. **Journey Mexico:** "Semana Santa Copper Canyon Hiking Trip," 10 days; \$2,490; www.journeymexico.com. **V**

UNITED STATES

Grand Canyon White Water

Marvel at the geological wonders of the Grand Canyon as you float, and sometimes speed—there are more than 40 major rapids—down the Colorado River on this classic rafting trip from Lees Ferry to Lake Mead, Arizona. Having operated here for more than 40 years, the outfitter boasts a stable of veteran guides and builds in time for exploring on foot. **O.A.R.S.:** "The Ultimate Grand Canyon Experience," 15-19 days; \$5,011 to \$5,628; www.oars.com.

CANADA

Sail the Great Bear Rain Forest

Explore the central coast of British Columbia, one of the largest tracts of unspoiled temperate rain forest in the world, aboard a classic wooden schooner.



Traveling under sail allows for a low-impact front-row seat to the Great Bear Rain Forest's ecosystem, the star of which is the elusive white Kermode bear, known as the "spirit" bear. Naturalists and First Nations elders provide commentary. **Maple Leaf Adventures:** "Great Bear Rain Forest Adventure," 8-10 days; \$4,900; www.mapleleafadventures.com.

UNITED STATES

Wild Triathlon

This Alaska expedition delves deep into one of the more remote areas of North America, first to the East Arm of Glacier Bay National Park for five days of sea kayaking amid calving glaciers and humpback and orca whales. Next,

don crampons to trek over snowfields to the headwaters of the Tsirku River, which you'll raft through the heart of the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve back to civilization. **Alaska Mountain Guides & Climbing School, Inc.:** "Glacier Bay Traverse," 12 days; \$3,400; www.alaskamountainguides.com. **C**

UNITED STATES

Backcountry New England

After more than 20 years of leading hikes in Europe, this Maine-based outfitter returns home with a hut-to-hut trek on a 180-mile system of trails and eco-lodges being developed in the western mountains. Climb 4,000-footers, meet up with parts of the Appalachian Trail, and cool off in alpine lakes. **Distant Journeys:** "Western Maine Mountains," 8 days; \$1,950; www.distantjourneys.com. **N V**

HAITI

Providing Assistance

Before the devastating 2010 earthquake, the port town of Jacmel in southern Haiti was known for its French colonial architecture, stunning seascapes, and

CANADA UNDER SAIL Maple Leaf Adventures employs a classic wooden schooner (below) to sail into the fjords and among the islands along the central coast of British Columbia. Participants get close to granite walls and waterfalls as they look out for the rare white spirit bear (above).





PARADISE FOUND Journey to Papua New Guinea with Natural Habitat Adventures for bird-watching and visits with locals in traditional villages.

thriving artist community. Lend a hand in its recovery by helping to build a vegetable garden at a children's home and community school. In your downtime, visit the cascading waterfalls of Bassin-Bleu and Croix des Bouquets, a village outside of Port-au-Prince known for its metal sculpture. **Elevate Destinations:** "Elevate Haiti: Jacmel Community School Volunteer Build-out," 15 days; from \$800; www.elevatedestinations.com. **V S**

CANADA

Inuit Odyssey

This cultural exploration kicks off in Montreal at an Inuit-owned arts cooperative, where you'll be prepped on all things Inuit before flying to Nunavik in northern Quebec. Stop at Diana Island to scout for prehistoric-looking musk oxen. Then head to Kangiqsujuaq for an immersion into Inuit culture; here, you'll pick mussels under the ice alongside locals, go dogsledding and meet the region's top mushers, and hear traditional throat singing by Inuit women. **ENF Canada:** "Under the Snow and Ice," 7 days; \$6,067; www.enfcanada.com.

PACIFIC ISLANDS & OCEANIA

ANTARCTICA

Way South on Skis

Celebrate the 100th anniversary of Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen's

arrival in the South Pole on December 14, 1911, by skiing the last 12 miles to very bottom of the world. A series of charter flights will take you from Punta Arenas, Chile, to 89° 45' S, where you'll strap on a pair of skis and head south, camping along the way. **PolarExplorers:** "Centennial South Pole Expedition," 8 days; \$52,500; www.polarexplorers.com. **N C**

NEW ZEALAND

Maori Immersion

Every February, Maori tribes from all over New Zealand congregate at Waitangi to commemorate the treaty between the Maori chiefs and England in 1840. The event culminates in a mass flotilla of waka (traditional canoes). Guests spend several days in the Maori community to learn the traditions, chants, and waka paddling technique before joining the warriors in the big event. **Cultural Crossroads:** "Maori Celebration in New Zealand," 8 days; \$6,196; www.culturalcrossroads.com. **N**

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Back to Eden

With its distinct flora and fauna and vast cultural diversity—some 860 languages are spoken among the country's indigenous peoples—Papua New Guinea seems largely unchanged over the centuries. The outfitter has crafted an

exploratory itinerary that brings you the best of the country's natural and cultural worlds: You'll go birding in the Tari rain forest, home to 13 species of birds of paradise, and visit the traditional Huli people, famous for their intricate wigs and largely unknown to outsiders until 1935. Guests stay at intimate eco-lodges in the highlands, jungle, and volcanic coast. **Natural Habitat Adventures:** "Wild Papua New Guinea," 12 days; \$9,495; www.nathab.com. **N**

AUSTRALIA

Tiger Shark Hangout

Each summer, thousands of endangered green turtles migrate to Raine Island in the far north of Australia's Great Barrier Reef to lay their eggs. The process attracts tiger sharks on the lookout for easy prey. This so-called Holy Grail of dive sites is off-limits to all but government research vessels. Here's your chance to see if the area lives up to its reputation working with a team led by renowned shark scientist Richard Fitzpatrick. Participants will assist in tracking, photographing, and collecting data on these lone predators. **Marine Encounters:** "Tiger Shark & Turtle Tagging Expedition," 8 days; \$5,200; www.marineencounters.com.au. **S C**

Contributing editor MARGARET LOFTUS lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

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Above: Travelers get an up close look at a California gray whale on our Baja California trip.



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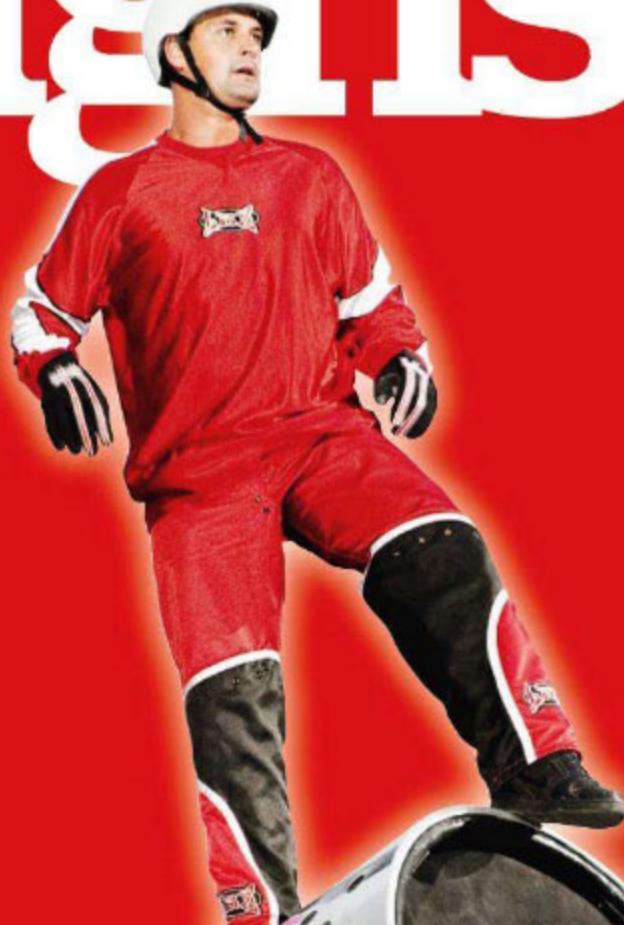
Cheeky business: The Grosses Têtes (big heads), send-ups of comedic characters, work a crowd at the Just for Laughs festival. Risky business (opposite): David "The Bullet" Smith rockets out of cannons.

Montreal Justfor Laughs

Canada's humor-loving metropolis turns into one big funny bone during its annual comedy festival.

BY Patrick J. Kelly

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Will Van Overbeek



The Quartier des Spectacles, the arts and entertainment

district in the heart of downtown Montreal, is in the throes of the 28th annual Just for Laughs Festival. In the past ten minutes I have been encircled by Les Androïdes, a hip-hop drill team of humanoid robots who look like they were designed by Peugeot or Studebaker; slandered (I think) by the French-speaking Mauvaises Langues, smart-aleck street performers garbed in elaborate tongue costumes; and hugged by Victor, the red-horned, roly-poly mascot of the festival. A large group of

Happily, the only thing anywhere near nightmarish in Montreal thus far has been selecting which shows to attend. The original concept for the Just for Laughs Festival, launched in the summer of 1983 with a four-day affair featuring 16 artists performing 35 shows for some 5,000 spectators, was to bring laughter and fun to as many people as possible. This year the festival has signed up an estimated 2,000 artists to perform for more than 1.5 million attendees over 24 days, making it the largest happening of its kind in the world. Choosing from the near-stupefying selection of A-list comedians, concerts, plays, skits, street-theater productions, and parades has proved a challenge.

I kicked off my comedy-palooza by attending the Night of a Million Opinions Gala, hosted by acerbic American comedian Lewis Black and held at Théâtre St-Denis, a state-of-the-art performance hall in the heart of Montreal's Latin Quarter. There is no dress code at Théâtre St-Denis, but with the gala being broadcast live on television, many of the 1,700 or so ticket holders wore something nice; the lady sitting next to me had poured herself into an iridescent dress that glowed in the dark and clanked like chain mail when she strolled to the bar to refresh her cocktail. Among

my favorite Lewis Black lines: his portrayal of the Old Testament as "a wonderful story told to people in the desert in order to distract them from the fact that they didn't have air-conditioning."

Wit and an appreciation for the absurd can be found year-round in Montreal. To my mind, Canada has always shown the U.S. what it means to have a sense of humor. For starters, it was home to SCTV, a comedy show that helped launch the likes of Martin Short and John Candy. Then there is the general bonhomie, which I experience on the cab ride from the airport to my hotel. The cabbie, upon learning this is my first visit to Montreal, embarks on an ode to his hometown. "The most beautiful city in North America! Montreal actually is an island shaped like a croissant, bordered on the south by the Saint



Paying big-time lip service, a pair of Mauvaises Langues (Bad Tongues) mouth off to festivalgoers.

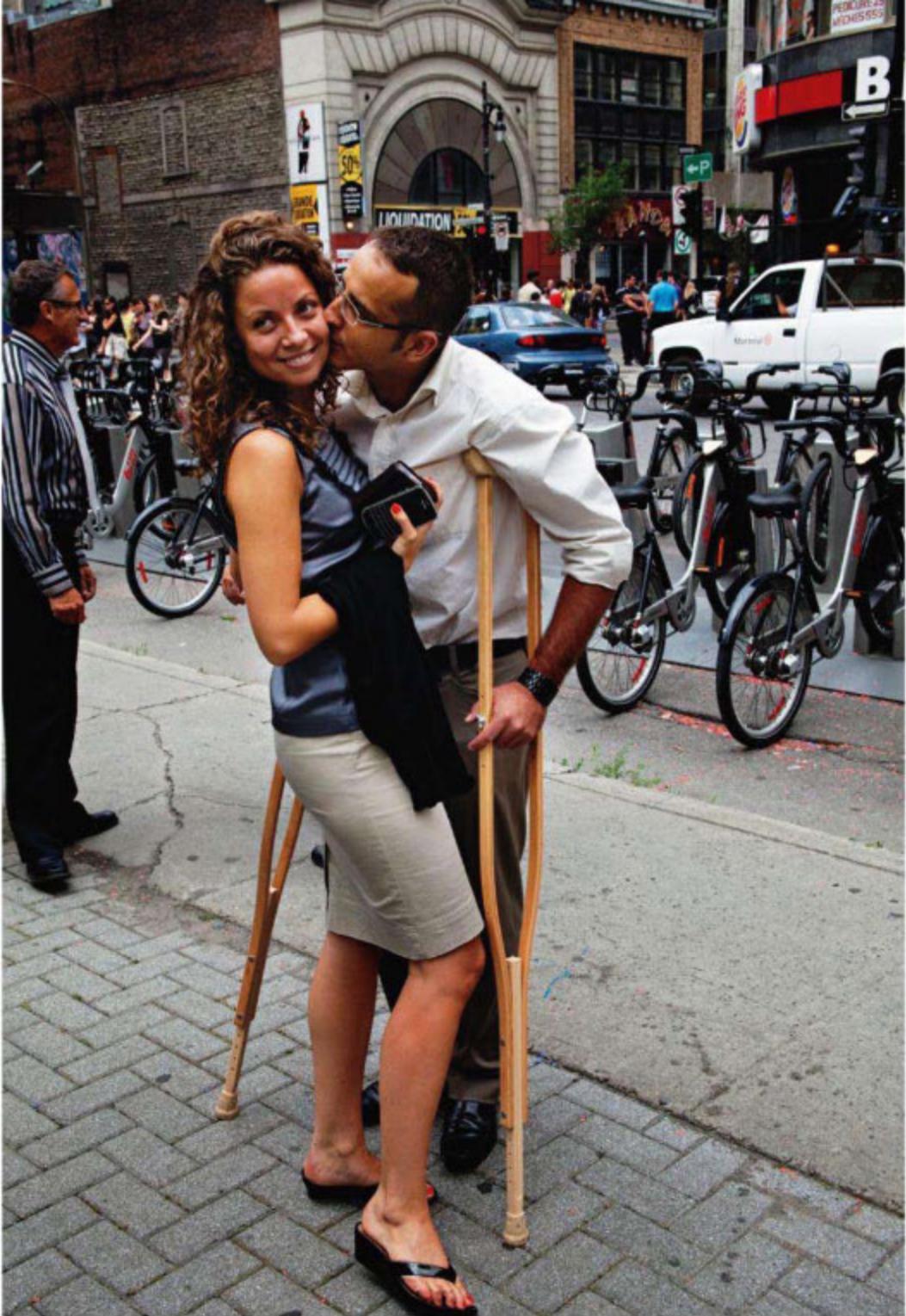
grade-schoolers sporting flashing red "Victor" horns trail him. "Where can I buy the horns?" I yell to them. They point in all directions, but before they can get out accompanying words, AC/DC's raucous rock anthem "Thunderstruck" erupts from a bank of outdoor speakers. I'm swept up by a mob surging toward an enormous painted cannon that is about to fire "L'Homme Canon," David "the Bullet" Smith, some 150 feet into a net that I now see is rimmed with exploding skyrockets. Finally I've found an entertainment district that actually lives up to its name!

MONTREAL CALLS ITSELF the "city of festivals" for its ambitious year-round calendar of events that proposes something for most every interest group, from music and dance to theater, cinema, and comedy. The latter is what I'm partial to—despite my own failed stand-up career, which began as a dream in Austin before turning into a nightmare one evening 20 years ago in front of a liquored-up crowd in Hollywood's The Comedy Store. I haven't been on a stage to "warm up" an audience since.

Lawrence River and on the north by the Rivière des Prairies. About 65 percent of Montrealers are French speakers, which makes this the second largest French-speaking city in the world after Paris, though Parisians pretend they can't understand our French. Fine. We're not French." Here he wags a finger. "Yes, we have French blood, and we've taken the best of French culture—the food, the fashion, the joie de vivre—but here," he says, waving his arms, "we have a lot more room to enjoy these things."

As we pull up to my hotel, he offers a final bit of advice. "It is customary to greet friends in Montreal by kissing them on both cheeks," he says, "always starting with the right cheek." Over the next few days I'll forget to lead with the right and bump noses or kiss someone's eyeball.

I chose the Auberge Bonaparte, on Rue St-François-Xavier, because it's on a side street a stone's throw from the banks of the Saint Lawrence River in Old Montreal, the birthplace of the city. Once I get the hang of jaywalking the steep, winding cobblestone streets here, I realize that I've checked into a pretty swanky



A sidewalk buss (left) elicits a smile on Phillips Square. Fare most fowl: Canned duck (above) is the treat at Au Pied de Cochon restaurant. All action and no talk, robot-like Les Androïdes dancers take it to the streets during Montreal's comedy festival (below).





Peering down from a stilted "pedestal," a hoop-skirted performer (left) with the French theater group L'Arbre à Nomades fields a passerby's inquiry. Theatrical flair also marks Montreal's venerable Boulangerie Première Moisson (above), purveyor of fine pastries.

neighborhood. Many of the restaurants, art galleries, and businesses in this popular tourist district occupy remarkably well-preserved classical revival- and Victorian-style buildings showcasing some 350 years of architectural history. This includes souvenir shops brimming with French Canadiana: fleur-de-lis flags, T-shirts, snow globes, and hockey pucks, which are considered exotic paperweights back in my home state of Texas.

From my room window I can make out Notre-Dame Basilica, an imposing hunk of 19th-century neo-Gothic masonry. Branded a Catholic at birth, I'm drawn to incense, stained glass, and saints, the more the merrier. So I enter, light a four-day prayer candle, then weave through tour groups to admire the basilica's dramatic lighting, towering stained glass windows, gilded statues of the saints, 7,000-pipe organ, and larger-than-life stations of the cross, each boasting a hand-crafted confessional. These should keep the line of sinners moving. "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was when Richard Nixon was President."

I'm intending to stay for the basilica's *son et lumière* (sound and light) show, but there has been a Fred Willard sighting in the downtown Hyatt Regency. Willard has carved out a special place in the annals of comedy with his improvisational skills, his performance as the clueless announcer in the 1970s parody TV talk show

"Montrealers live for the weekend. They'll never ask what you do for a living; they'll just enjoy the moment with you."

I've just spotted red-horned festival mascot Victor, accompanied this evening by smoking-hot members of a Dixieland/rave band.

By the time I reach the downtown Hyatt Regency, the unofficial nerve center of the festival, there is no sign of Fred Willard—though a waitress (wearing red devil horns; where did she get them?) assures me the legend himself was sitting right there by the elevator minutes ago.

Bummed, I head back outside, fingers crossed that I'll run into the man among the street festivities. Perhaps he would be intrigued by the quirky contemporary dance performance "Auto-Fiction: Human Trio and One Car," by the Canadian group Human Playground. I certainly am as I watch three street dancers vault over, slide into, and pirouette around a station wagon. I'm guessing

Fernwood 2 Night, and his scene-stealing appearances in such films as *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*, *This Is Spinal Tap*, and *Best In Show*. I have to snag at least a glimpse of his eminence.

The crowds are bigger than ever this evening in the Quartier des Spectacles, so again I find myself a bit player in a Felliniesque parade. Les Grosses Têtes, tall caricatures of comedians marked by immense heads, are working the crowd. When I bump into one, it bends over and pats me on the noggin. "Find me some devil horns!" I implore it;

"Find me some devil horns!" I implore it;



Montreal's oldest—and most walkable—street, 17th-century Rue St-Paul serves up cafés, shops, and magnifique views of the domed Bonsecours Market.

"I ditch my shoes and pad into what looks like a psychedelic romper room illuminated with liquid color."

their moves are a comment on the central role the automobile plays in modern life.

Or maybe Willard is more of a surround-me-with-color guy, in which case he may be wandering the giant inflatable sculpture of tunnels and domes called "Architects of Air Luminarium." I ditch my shoes and pad into what looks like a psychedelic romper room illuminated with liquid color. The mazelike interior reminds me of the capillaries and blood vessels in the 1966 movie *Fantastic Voyage*. Other visitors crawl, sit, or just zone out. Because it's made of vinyl, the luminarium poses almost no risk of bodily harm; the only way anybody possibly could get hurt is by knocking heads with someone bouncing off an adjacent tunnel. Oops....

"Pardon," I mumble sheepishly.

Shuffling my shoes back on, I fall in with some devil-horned kids headed to a bubble booth. Request your favorite song then step into the booth. As lights flash, foaming bubbles appear from a dozen directions, encouraging you to sculpt yourself into an animal, or action hero—really anything the imagination dreams up. Seems like a perfect venue for Fred. Just when it's my turn, though, those trouble-making tongues, the Mauvaises Langues, reappear. They find it really funny that I'm in line with children—and happily blab that to the surrounding crowd.

This playful tongue lashing and Willard's no-show prompt me to revisit my plans, so I wander back toward my hotel. Somewhere along the way I realize I've entered an area I don't recognize and, more surprising, someone has moved the sunset to the north. "Is that a Canadian thing?" I wonder. It turns out the original street grid of Montreal was organized relative to the Old Port on the Saint Lawrence waterfront. North is actually northwest, so the sun appears to rise in the south, not the east, and set in the north, not the west.

Between this geographical dislocation and the disorienting hubbub of the festival's street events, I feel like I'm bumping along in the figurative dark. But there's dark, and there's Montreal dark. That's what Mert, a student at nearby McGill University whom I've, well, bumped into in a café, is telling me. "You have to check out O.Noir," he announces. "You eat in complete darkness, and the waitstaff is blind." Noting the look of confusion on my face, he adds, "Trust me. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience." I jot down the tip and wish Mert luck in his studies. Drum sounds from nearby Mount Royal Park are beckoning, so I head over—and find the Tam-Tam Jam, another performance, in full swing. Tam-tam is French for hand drum; Mount Royal Park is 470 acres of green space smack-dab in the middle of the city, with trails that wind 770 feet to the summit of the aforesaid Mount Royal, the mountain (really, hill) Montreal is named for.

Sixty or so drummers are laying down the rhythm on everything from bongos and African *djembe*s to a plastic bucket. Frisbees are flying, tie-dye is everywhere, and free spirits of all ages and skill levels are dancing to the wall of drumbeats. Grandpa's out there, shirtless, shoeless, and sunburned, grooving like back in the day when a Grateful Dead concert could last for weeks. "Pace yourself, man," I mutter. If I could score a plastic bucket, I'd step up and play "Wipe Out."

Instead, I hop a bus and ride to the summit of Mount Royal to scout out the Oratoire Saint-Joseph—Saint Joseph Oratory—a basilica that is one of the most visited Roman Catholic shrines in North America. Some of my best work before a live audience took place when I was an altar boy; those standing-room-only church crowds proved powerfully inspiring. I soon learned my limits,

however: Getting caught doing vaudeville under the cross carried severe penalties (not to mention penances), so in my impromptu performances, less was more.

Too bad I didn't have my own Saint Joseph Oratory to perform in. The renaissance-style basilica, finished in 1967 and topped by a dome 318 feet high—almost the height of Michelangelo's dome for Rome's St. Peter's Basilica—is vast enough to hold an entire dirigible. I try to square it with the original oratory, a wooden chapel the size of a storage shed founded in 1904 by humble Brother André, whose eventual reputation as a miraculous healer earned him sainthood by the Vatican in 2010.

I GRAB A CAB THAT IS IDLING in front of the pilgrims' service center. Something about the oratory and my church memories of

priests preaching deprivation are now prompting me to see what Mert's O.Noir is all about. As we pull away, the driver informs me he is bipolar "and on my down mode at the moment, so bear with me." I learn he just moved to Montreal from "that overgrown hog town, Toronto," which brings up another Montreal tidbit. The city considers itself the cultural mecca of Canada and never tires of pointing out that Toronto, Canada's financial capital, was once the pork-processing powerhouse of the British Empire.

"Toronto is all about making money and roaring around in fancy cars," my driver says. "Torontonians can't wait for Monday morning, to get back to the grind. Montrealers live for the weekend. They'll never ask what you do for a living or what kind of car you drive; they'll just enjoy the moment with you."

By the time we pull up to O.Noir, he seems to have shifted into his up mode. "Enjoy your meal—and try not to drop your fork," he says, breaking into laughter.

O.Noir is wedged between the Salon Barbier and Fat's Pub and Billiards on Rue Ste-Catherine. A sign in the window reads:

"Canada's first ever restaurant that invites you to experience food, drink, and conversation like never before—In The Dark! After a few hours in complete darkness you'll gain a better understanding of what it's like to be blind—just like our entire waitstaff." Encouragingly, part of O.Noir's profits go to local associations that serve the blind and visually impaired.

When I enter, one of the sighted girls working the front bar takes my order and introduces me to Philip, a college student wearing Elvis-like shades.

"I'll be your server this evening," he says, then has me place my hand on his shoulder and leads me through heavy black curtains, which drag across my face. We're entering the pitch-black dining area. I hear dinner conversations and the clatter of flatware. Philip guides me to my table and helps me into my chair.

"I'm going to place your beer on your left, next to the wall," he says.

"Good thinking," I answer.

The absence of sight does seem to cue my ears to pay more attention, an interesting, even entertaining, sensation—until a barrage of squeals and shrieks erupts somewhere behind me. It sounds like a busload of excited sorority girls. As I dig into my marinated shrimp with herbs, the din increases to the point where I find myself grumbling loudly into the darkness, "Stuff a sock in it." This seems to only incite them to kick it up a few hundred decibels—and it dawns on me that they would make the perfect audience for the comedy acts playing in town. Heck, if they'd been in the audience for my stand-up act, maybe I would have been on stage right now instead of blindly calling out for my handler.

"Philip! Please, a little help over here. Yo, Phil..."

"I'm right here," Philip coos, appearing from nowhere.

"Let's skip the surprise dessert, amigo. It's too noisy in here."

I leave a big tip, latch on to him with both hands, and bolt out to Rue Ste-Catherine with a full stomach and a renewed appreciation for the precious gift of sight.

Which gets me thinking: That gift of sight is integral to any appreciation of the comedy playing out on Montreal's stages. Comedy, after all, is both about what we see and what we hear. As if to punctuate that, I spot a bevy of long-legged cancan girls wearing enormous see-through hoop skirts and maneuvering around on stilts. The sight transfixes me—until my old friends, the Mauvaises Langues, show up. Now they find my shoes (sensible black brogues) worthy of ridicule. The crowd agrees. I'm reliving my Hollywood moment.

I indignantly muster my minimal French (mostly cribbed from the breakfast menu) for a double-barreled riposte. "Monsieur, oeufs plus faciles, s'il vous plaît!" I can see them quake in their shoes. I feel redeemed. It takes me a few minutes to realize that what I shouted was, "Sir, eggs over easy, please!" Their quaking isn't from fear.

Intended or not, comedy and laughter seem to be in Montreal's very atmosphere. My final day I make my way to yet another performance, where I'm gripped by a strange sensation. "I belong here," I say to myself. "This is a city where the creative joy of humor is revered. I'll apply for dual citizenship and start working the open-mike nights at the dozens of comedy clubs. Then maybe, in a year or ten, I'll find my name listed next to 'Fred Willard.'" As confirmation—or is it repudiation?—a garbage truck rumbles up, and I note that the driver is wearing the red devil horns. My red devil horns.

Contributing editor PATRICK J. KELLY and photographer WILL VAN OVERBEEK last teamed up for our story "A Thousand Islands of Summer" (May/June 2010).

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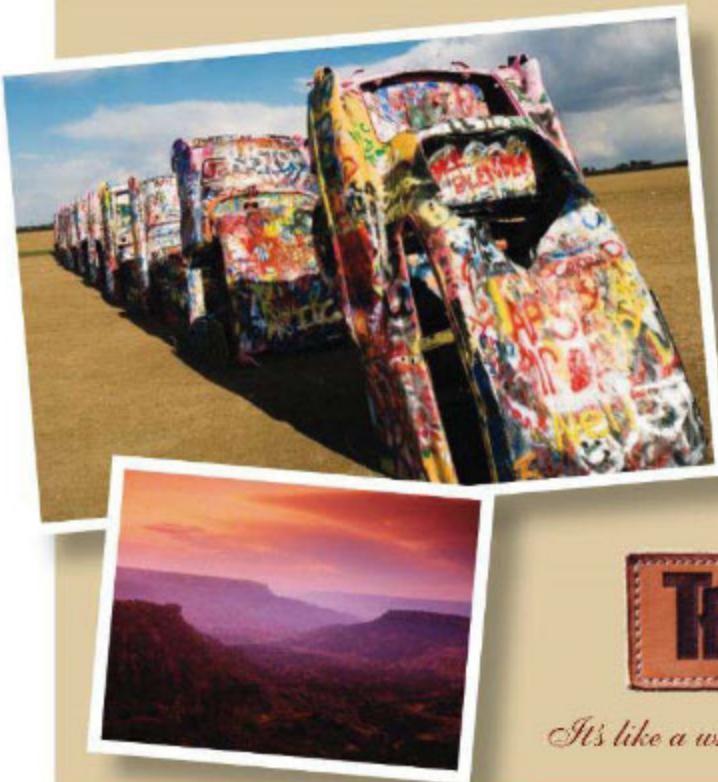
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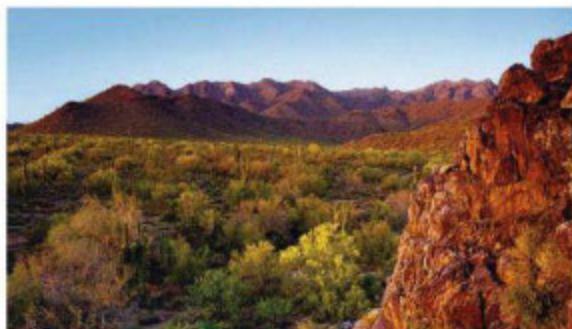
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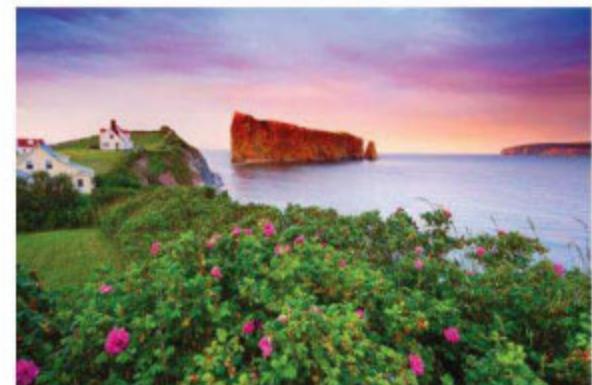


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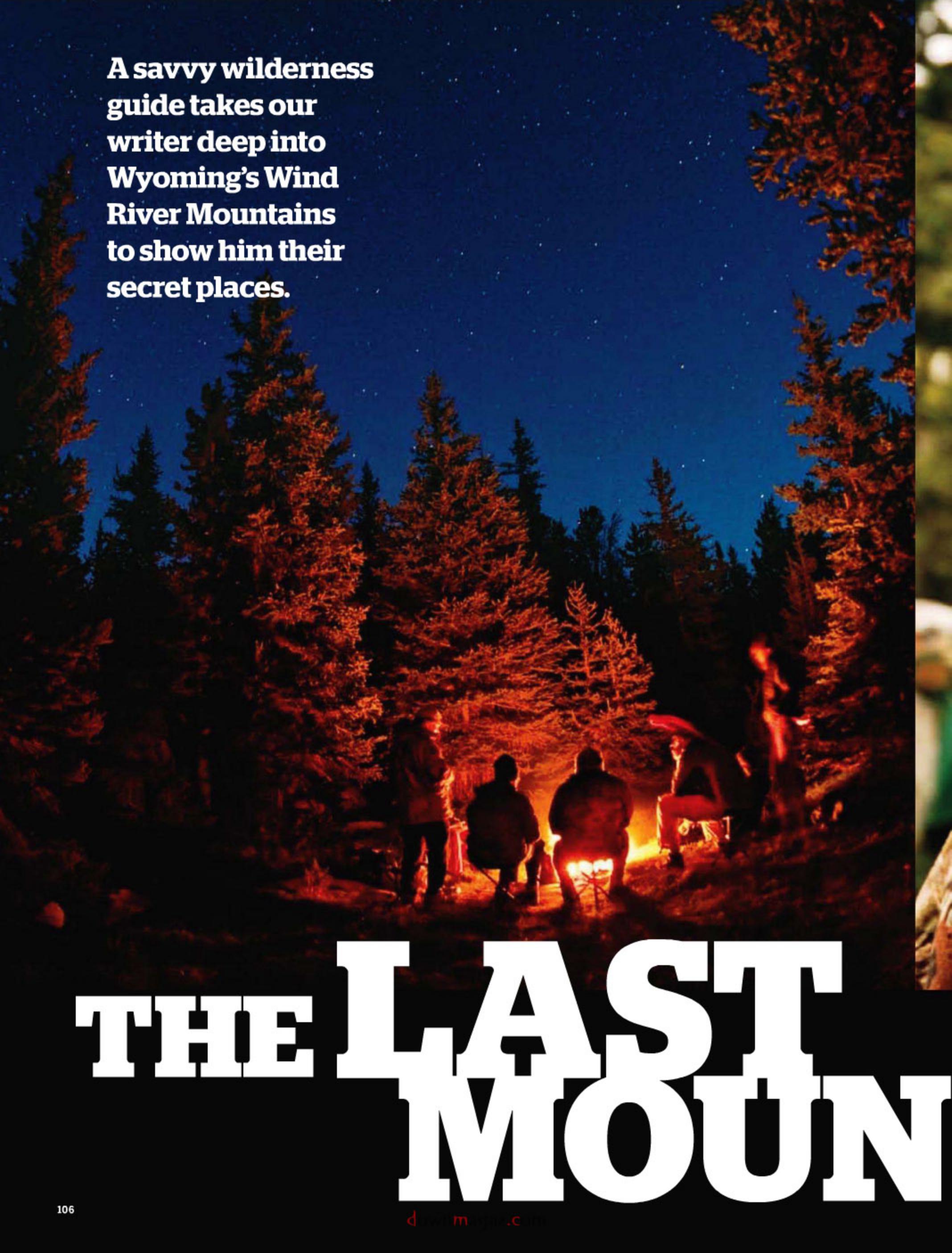
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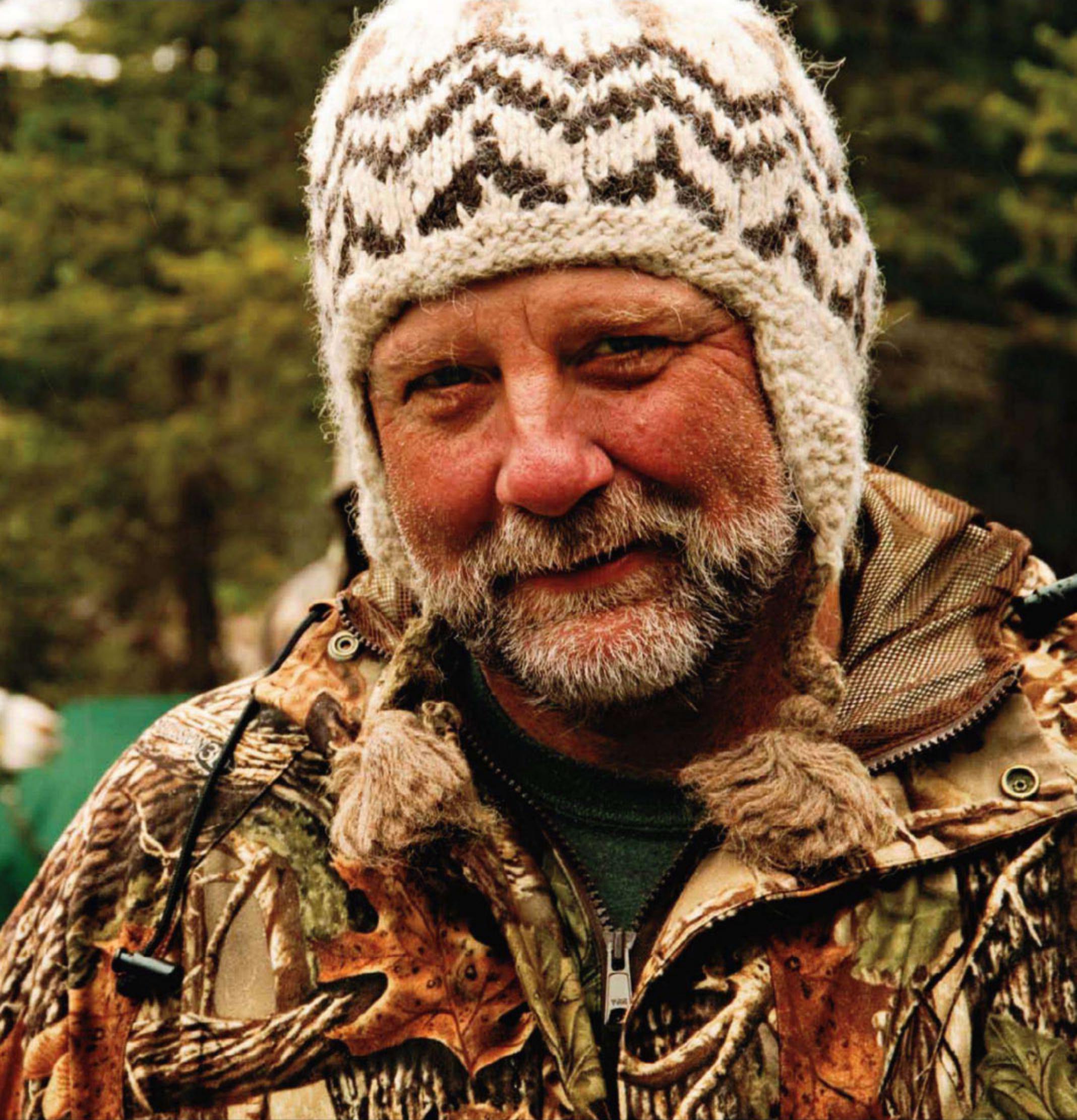
109. REVO

The cle



A savvy wilderness guide takes our writer deep into Wyoming's Wind River Mountains to show him their secret places.

THE LAST MOUNTAIN



by DAVID ROBERTS
photographs by DAWN KISH

FAWN MAN

d m .c

here does that go?" I ask Scott Woodruff, pointing out a faint path in the underbrush that crosses the river then seems to peter out among the pines. ¶ "Old horse trail up to Squirrel Lake," he replies after a perfunctory glance. "Nobody goes up there anymore." ¶ I'm not surprised Scott knows the answer—even without looking at a map. Over the past 25 years, as founder and owner of Lander Llama Company, he has hiked this six-day, 40-mile loop in Wyoming's remote Wind River Mountains 60 or 70 times, as he guides clients through some of the most pristine wilderness left in the contiguous United States. This afternoon, the eight of us

stroll along the main trail up the Middle Fork of the Popo Agie (pronounced Po-PO-zha) River, a light load in our day packs, cameras clicking in staccato homage to the scenery, while nine well-trained llamas haul all the provisions we need to camp in luxury.

I know the Winds pretty well myself—this is my ninth extended journey among its sharp peaks and tundra plateaus—but I still rely on a topographical map to keep my bearings. Peering now at my Sweetwater Gap 1:24,000 quadrangle, I find no trace of the old horse trail on the chart and no name for the lonely lake, indicated by a blue oval, nestled in a basin 350 feet above us.

As a serious mountaineer, I devoted all my earliest trips into the Winds to pursuing unclimbed routes on sweeping granite walls. This time, at age 67, I'm here not to climb but to discover some of the seldom seen corners of the range. I want to prowl the headwater cirques above picturesque lakes, to explore the valleys and glaciers first probed, with much trepidation and anxiety, by 19th-century mountain men. I want to see the Winds through the eyes of the only Native Americans who ever lived in these high peaks, the Sheepeaters. And who better to lead me than Scott Woodruff, a 21st-century mountain man who makes a living not by trapping and trading but by revealing the splendors of this 3,515-square-mile Rocky Mountain paradise to outsiders.

Throughout our six-day ramble, Scott steers us to his secret places, especially the tucked-away campsites he has spent decades scouting out. The evening before, we switched from hiking boots to sandals, waded the Middle Fork, pushed through a thicket of thigh-high reeds, and pitched our tents in a part of Bills Park, a marshy meadow, that nobody else seems to know about. As the sun sank, the stream meandered through, and willows swayed in the warm August breeze.

I spent an hour catching and releasing seven or eight mid-size brook trout. Then Steve Foelker and Kara Faciszewski, Scott's assistant guides, served us a robust dinner of spaghetti with meat sauce, garlic bread, and "gooey bars," rich brownies concocted by Scott's wife, Therese, who prepares all the expedition meals beforehand. Afterward we sat around the fire as Scott regaled us with



stories of eccentric past clients, such as the Englishman who, first night in camp, asked Scott (innocently, it turned out) to go skinny-dipping with him. "I've never been skinny-dipping," the man shyly explained. "Would you show me how?" Scott obliged.

The next day, we leave the Middle Fork and climb a steep trail to a pass overlooking Ice Lakes basin. Around 2 p.m., Scott abruptly veers off the trail and plunges down a grassy slope. We follow—llamas, assistants, clients, and all. Twenty minutes later, we arrive at a subalpine oasis—a copse of trees at 10,500 feet adjoining a meadow perfect for llama-grazing, supplied by a hidden spring whose water is so pure we don't bother to treat it before drinking. It's another of Scott's secret places, a refuge just out of sight of Boot Lake, an angler's haven. We'll spend three nights here. After we've

set up our tents, I ask Scott: "Why'd you take that shortcut?"

The guide's rugged face breaks into a half-sheepish smile. "It's kind of an old Western, cowboy thing. You know: Head 'em off at the pass," he says, referring to another group we spotted ahead of us that might have been heading toward the same spot.

"Or a mountain man kind of thing?"

The smile disappears. "Those guys—Colter, Bridger, Bonneville, and the rest—I think they were motivated by the same impulse I felt when I first hiked in the Winds—the urge to explore. 'What's over the next ridge?' 'Am I the first one ever to be here?' But the risks they took were so much greater than ours. They had half the equipment and no maps. What they did have was balls."

STRETCHING 90 MILES from northwest to southeast in western Wyoming, the Wind Rivers form the longest mountain chain in the lower 48 with no road crossing it. No range in North America so abounds in lakes—more than 2,000 of them. And no range is so lavish with meadows and timberline plateaus, across which pikas and marmots scuttle on their inscrutable errands. And few ranges anywhere contain so much smooth and swooping rock—great cliffs of granite, as well as bands of gneiss and granodiorite. One other geological quirk: The seven largest active glaciers in the country outside of Alaska all flow from Wind River headwalls.



At Boot Lake, guide Kara Faciszewski displays brook trout to be fried with butter, lemon, and spices; breakfast is blueberry pancakes (*inset*). Opening pages: Fire and starlight brighten a campsite at Pinto Park, a grassy meadow, where Scott Woodruff wears a warm hat made from llama wool.

Much of the range is contained today in the Bridger-Teton National Forest. We don't know how much time that great mountain man, Jim Bridger, might have spent trapping beaver in the Winds, but he was instrumental in organizing the three rendezvous—those drunken orgies of gambling, horse racing, and swapping tall tales during which the mountain men came together every summer to sell their pelts—that were held in plain sight of the range. The 1838 rendezvous took place at the junction of the Popo Agie and the Wind River, some 25 miles northeast of our camp on Boot Lake. The canny scout and trapper Kit Carson attended that rendezvous, his last; four years later, he would guide the most ambitious mountain-climbing expedition undertaken to that date anywhere in North America into the heart of the Winds.

On our third day, the rest of the gang decides to hang out and fish Boot Lake and its neighbor to the north, Jug Lake. I set off alone, cross a saddle above timberline, and descend into the north-

shift to another U.S. army officer, John C. Frémont. In 1842, on the first of his five expeditions across the West, Frémont made a long detour off the Oregon Trail to try to climb the peak he had decided was the highest in North America. His guide was Kit Carson, who thought he could lead Frémont's 15-man party to the foot of the peak. (Unfortunately, Fremont Peak, as it's now named, is not even the highest in the Winds, let alone in North America; Gannett Peak, four miles to the north, outstrips it by 59 feet.)

As it had for Bonneville, the Winds proved rougher than expected for Frémont and Carson. Frémont concluded in his official expedition report, also a best seller when it came out, that the range was a "gigantic disorder of enormous masses," amid which he was stunned by "a stillness most profound and a terrible solitude." Yet after innumerable hardships and setbacks, Frémont and five teammates reached the summit block, which was so precarious that "it seemed a breath would hurl [it] into the abyss below."

On my way back to camp from the Deep Creek cirque, I think, Yeah, those mountain men were tough. But the Wind Rivers were tougher.

I'm confronted with jumbled boulders. I move with stodgy caution, using hands and feet to swing from one sharp crest to another. A single slip and I could easily BREAK A LEG...OR MY SKULL.

facing cirque at the head of Deep Creek Lakes. I'm confronted with jumbled boulders, some as big as houses. To get to the head of the highest lake, I have to move with stodgy caution, using hands and feet to swing from one sharp boulder-crest to the next, dark gaps yawning below me: A single slip and I could easily break a leg...or my skull. It takes me an hour to cover a quarter-mile.

I lie on my back to rest on a patch of green grass beside a glacier-fed torrent leaping from slab to slab. I'm far from the nearest trail, well above the highest fishable lakes. There's a sense that very few people have ever been here. I'm thinking about Benjamin Bonneville. In 1833 the French-born trapper made the first recorded attempt by any non-Native American to cross the Wind Rivers. The diaries he kept have long been lost, but he lent them to Washington Irving, who "digested" them into a book called *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A.*, a best seller when it appeared. Looking for a shortcut to the Green River from the east side of the Winds, Bonneville and his three companions headed up the Popo Agie. The country was far more rugged than the men bargained for: As Irving writes, they "soon found themselves in the midst of stupendous crags and precipices that barred all progress."

Bonneville gave up hope of a traverse of the range, but he was determined to get to its crest for a good view. After two more days of "arduous climbing and scrambling," the men penetrated "into the heart of this mountainous and awful solitude." Finally, with a single partner, the captain got close to his summit. Claims Irving: "The ascent was so steep and rugged that he and his companion were frequently obliged to clamber on hands and knees, with their guns slung upon their backs." At last the two men stood on top, where "a scene burst upon the view of Captain Bonneville, that for a time astonished and overwhelmed him with its immensity."

Historians argue about which summit Bonneville reached, but the leading candidate is Wind River Peak. Heading into the Deep Creek cirque, I topped the shoulder of that mountain at 11,400 feet elevation. For all I knew, I'd crossed paths with Bonneville 177 years after his intrepid probe into uncharted wilderness.

I rise from my blissful cushion of grass and hike on, heading for the base of a thousand-foot wall of sheer granite that I know no one has ever climbed or even attempted. Now my thoughts

BACK AT BOOT LAKE THAT AFTERNOON, I learn that Steve, Scott's assistant, is planning to supplement our dinner with a specialty: trout filets dredged in flour, flavored with lemon, and sautéed in a big iron skillet. He has already caught eight or nine brookies. I unlimber my pole and land two big ones from a granite slab shelving into the lake. Then Ken Karbon, a client who has come to the Winds three times to fish with Lander Llama, trudges into camp, looking weary but contented.

"How many fish did you catch?" I ask him.

"Oh, about 20."

"Great. What a fish fry we're going to have."

Ken looks abashed. "I didn't know we were going to cook them," he confesses. "I threw them all back."

Later I sit in the llama meadow with Kara and ask her impressions of her summertime boss. In front of us, the ruminants that have carried all our gear and food are peacefully munching grass. "The llamas are what make Scott Scott," she says.

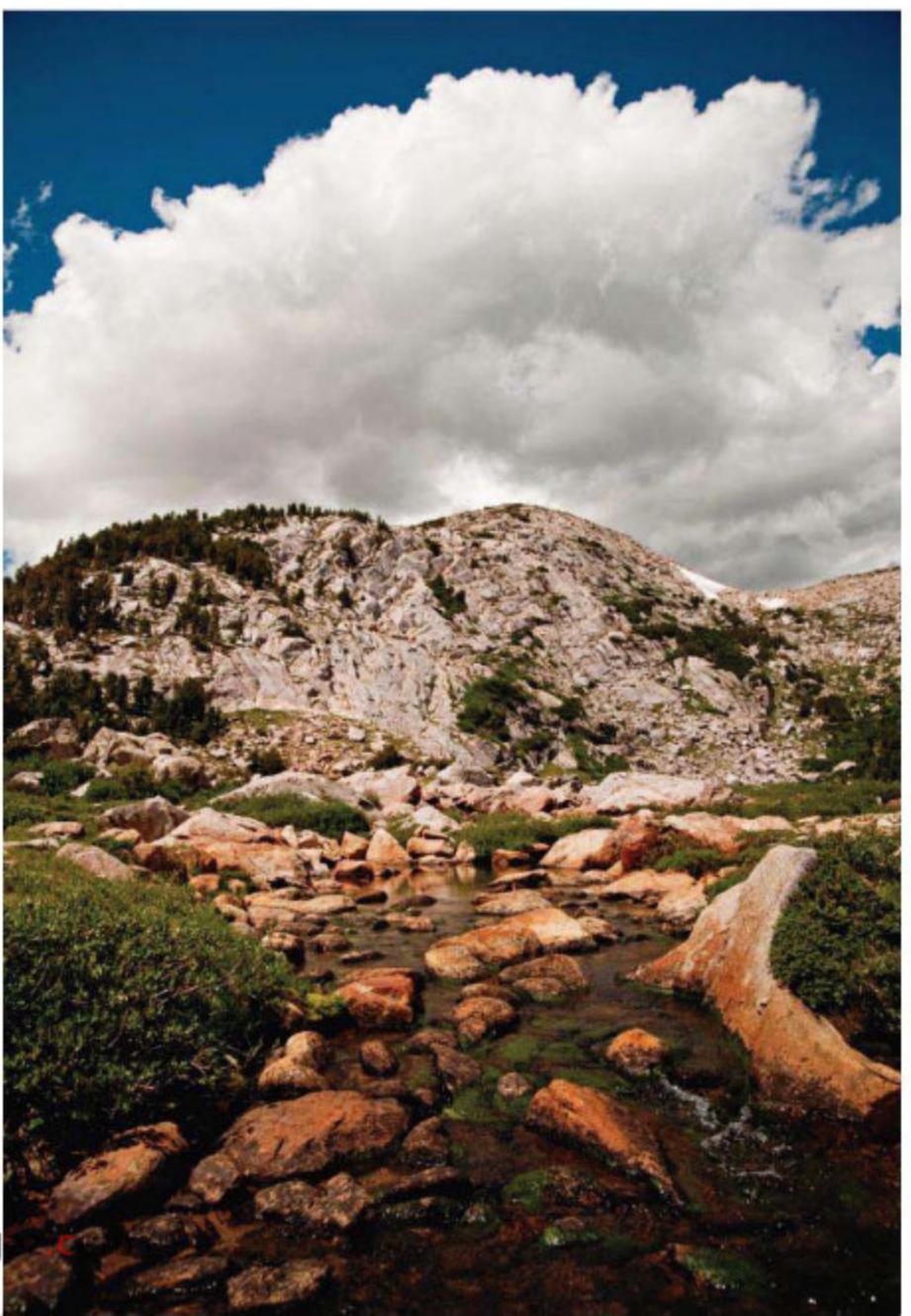
It's a shrewd insight. Before dinner that evening, sitting on a log beside Scott, I ask him, "How'd you get into llama trekking?"

His eyes seem to light up. "I grew up in Wisconsin," he says, "where I met Therese. We both loved the outdoors. One day—I was about 27—I came across a picture in an outdoors magazine of a guy in a hat, with a cheesy grin, leading a llama. I said to myself, 'This is too good to be true!'"

As he talks, I study our guide. At 53, he's strong, stocky, and fit with the grizzled look you see in old engravings of mountain men who've spent a few too many months without seeing a bathtub. "I'd already hiked in the Wind Rivers," Scott continues, "so I knew it would be the perfect place to run a commercial llama-packing outfit."

Scott moved to Lander in 1985 and worked three jobs while waiting to get a permit from the national forest. He started Lander Llama that same year with six animals.

"Every waking minute I'd take those llamas into the backcountry, learning the valleys and learning my wilderness business philosophy as I went. It's pretty basic. Give the clients spectacular beauty and comfort—good gear and good food, fresh steaks and fruit, not freeze-dried noodles. And focus on low impact. Camp



Clockwise from top: Kara gathers the llamas for loading as the group prepares to break camp at Bills Park. Many remote parts of the range, such as this granite ridge, are above timberline. Alpine asters color the meadows, as do Indian paintbrush, columbines, scarlet gilia, and other wildflowers.

at least 200 feet from a lake or stream. Use only downed timber for firewood. Green tents, earth-toned packs, blend in with the scenery. And I'd find my own secret campsites." He looks at me. "Pretty nice one here, don't you think?"

OUR FOURTH DAY in the Winds turns out to be our most ambitious. We're off shortly after 8 a.m. Scott and Steve take Ken and another client, Dick, on a long fishing circuit north into lower Deep Creek basin. They don't get back for ten hours. When they do, an exhausted Ken is happy. "Got all four," he brags, "brooks, rainbows, cutthroats, and goldens. A grand slam of trout." They've fished every shore of a pair of sparkling lakes, catching and releasing more fish than they can count.

"You can thank Finis Mitchell for a day like today," Scott says. Finis (pronounced Fine-us) was a latter-day mountain man who grew up on the edge of the range in the early 20th century. During his long life, he climbed 244 peaks in the Winds, and by his late 70s had taken (by his own reckoning) 105,345 pictures of his beloved wilderness. To make ends meet during the Depression, in 1930 Finis and his wife, Emma, set up Mitchell's Fish Camp near Big Sandy Opening on the southwest corner of the Winds. Trouble was, only about five lakes in the sprawling range held fish. To remedy this defect, Finis horse-packed trout into the backcountry, in seven years stocking 314 lakes with some two and a half million fish, according to his book, *Wind River Trails*. Once the Fishing Camp was up and running, the couple charged their dudes \$1.50 a day to guide them into the backcountry.

That same fourth day of our trek, Mark (another client), Kara, and photographer Dawn Kish head for Wind River Peak, which rises 2,700 feet above camp on the west. By 11 a.m., they're on the summit plateau. But just below the top, a snowfield almost as hard as ice nearly turns them back. Dawn works out a bypass tiptoeing close to the mountain's sheer north face and coaxes her companions to the highest point. Back in camp that afternoon, Mark declares: "That's the best day I've ever had in the wilderness."

I set off that morning on another solo cirque prowl to the head of the southernmost branch of Ice Lakes basin. This time it's the Sheepeater Indians who fill my thoughts, as I try to imagine their way of life here 200 years ago, before the mountain men arrived.

The Sheepeaters, a branch of the Shoshone tribe, were driven by their enemies—Crow, Blackfeet, and other Shoshone—to take refuge in the Wind Rivers. They were named by Anglos for their unmatched skill at hunting bighorn sheep, which they shot with arrows launched from beautifully crafted bows made, appropriately enough, of bighorn sheep horns. Yet theirs was a marginal existence. Unlike their neighbors, the Sheepeaters never domesticated the horse, traveling from valley to valley only with travois dragged behind their dogs. Simply to survive, they mastered the art of concealment. Only a handful of white explorers ever made contact with these refugees.

One was Benjamin Bonneville. On his retreat from the range in 1833, one of the captain's comrades spotted three "savages" running across the valley below him. He fired his gun in hopes of luring the men to a parley, only to see them run all the faster.

Irving's paraphrase of Bonneville's journals summarizes the prevailing view among the mountain men of the Sheepeaters:

They are miserably poor; own no horses, and are destitute of every convenience to be derived from an intercourse with the whites... These forlorn beings have been looked down upon with contempt by the creole trappers, who have given them the appellation of "les dignes de pitié," or "the objects of pity."

Now, at the head of Ice Lakes basin, I try to imagine those long-ago hunters somehow managing to bring down enough game to feed their families through the brutal winters. The feat seems unfathomable: It's hard enough for me simply to clamber from one rocky ledge to another, let alone play at stalking bighorn sheep.

I top a ridge and see a buck deer a hundred yards away. He takes a good look at me before loping effortlessly out of sight. Even with a high-powered rifle, I wouldn't have time to get off a shot. With a bow and arrow, forget it.

Later, I find five tiny pieces of chert lying on the ground, flakes chipped off a core stone by hunters as they crafted knives and scrapers and arrowheads. They're the only vestiges of the Sheepeaters I've ever found in the Winds.

Poor? Destitute? The objects of pity? I don't think so. For centuries, I reflect, those alpine indigenes mastered a landscape so severe that no one else has ever lived here year-round. It's a strange conceit, I realize, but maybe the ultimate mountain men were the Sheepeaters.

ON OUR FIFTH AND LAST NIGHT, we camp in another of Scott's secret places, on the edge of a green meadow not far from the broad saddle of Pinto Park. We can see the jagged ridges of the Cirque of the Towers, nine miles to the west. That's where I first went into the Winds, way back in 1968, when my best friend and I camped for a week at Lonesome Lake and climbed the walls of Pingora and Block Tower and Watchtower.

A sudden storm, mixing rain, snow, and hail, sweeps over us and is gone in half an hour, leaving the bluest sky we've seen. Just after 8 p.m., the sun slides behind the distant knife-edge of Wolf's Head in the Cirque. The air's so clear that we catch an instantaneous glimpse of the rare green flash. Half an hour later, a crescent moon, with Venus poised directly above it, spangles the sky in the southwest. And an hour after that, in full darkness, we watch meteors blazing into nothingness, as Perseus rises in the northeast.

It's our coldest night yet, the temperature dipping to about 25 degrees Fahrenheit; next morning, there's ice in our water bottles. But I stay up around the campfire almost till midnight. I'm not ready to go home. How many more trips will I ever take into my favorite range in the West?

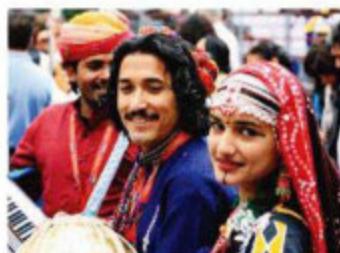
That evening, I ask Scott about his future. A quarter century, I muse, is a long time to guide the Wind Rivers. "It's been a good ride," he answers. "I can see doing it for a few more years." He pauses to stare into the campfire. "But one thing I know—I'm not going anywhere else. I'm gonna die here in Wyoming."

Writer DAVID ROBERTS and photographer DAWN KISH covered the Ute Mountain Tribal Park in our April feature, "Beyond Mesa Verde."



"On my early trips to the Winds," says author Roberts, "I groaned under an 80-pound pack." Then he switched to llamas, which can haul 80-90 pounds each, like these passing the Middle Fork of the Popo Agie River.





MAY 23-28 PRAGUE

Gypsy Life Now in its 13th year, the Khamoro festival draws Roma (Gypsies) from across Europe and India to showcase traditional and contemporary Gypsy culture through concerts,

dance, exhibitions, and a film festival. Other highlights include performances by Bulgaria's Martin Lubenov Orkestar and Portugal's Ciganos d'Ouro and a parade of musicians and dancers through the streets of Prague. www.khamoro.cz/en

TRAVELER 20

[TRAVEL-WORTHY EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS]

APRIL 30-MAY 8

ST. LUCIA, WEST INDIES

Beach Jams Live jazz and soul pair with ocean breezes and sandy beaches at the 20th annual St. Lucia Jazz Festival. Pigeon Island National Landmark and Rodney Bay host the festival mainstage. John Legend headlines a roster of entertainers that includes Trey Songz, Angélique Kidjo, Chuck Brown, and the Yellowjackets. Between performances, hike up to Fort Rodney to see where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Caribbean Sea. www.stluciajazz.org

MAY 5

LONDON

A Grande Dame Makeover Shuttered for decades, the former Midland Grand Hotel will reopen its doors as the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel after a \$240-million restoration. The striking red brick building, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, towers over London's Kings Cross and St Pancras railway stations. A protest led by former poet laureate Sir John Betjeman saved the hotel from demolition in the 1960s. The London landmark flaunts Victorian Gothic pomp once again with such features as a three-story grand staircase. www.StPancrasRenaissance.co.uk

MAY 11-22

CANNES, FRANCE

Lights, Camera, Action The 64th

Festival de Cannes opens at the Lumière theater with Woody Allen's new film, *Midnight in Paris*. The opening film this year will be screened in cinemas throughout France on the same day along with a live broadcast of the opening night ceremony. The Cinéma de la Plage, an outdoor screen at Mace Beach, shows a different film free each night of the festival. www.festival-cannes.com

MAY 17-29

LEIPZIG, GERMANY

Mega Mahler Marking the 100th anniversary of Gustav Mahler's death, Leipzig will present all ten of the composer's symphonies over two weeks during the International Mahler Festival. Participating orchestras include Leipzig's Gewandhausorchester, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic. Mahler lived for two years in this German city on the Pleisse River and wrote portions of his first and second symphonies here. www.mahler-2011.de/en

MAY 18-22

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TEXAS

Kiteboard Heaven Consistent winds, balmy weather, and the flat, shallow water of Laguna Madre Bay make ideal

conditions for the third annual South Padre Island Kite Round-Up. Watch seasoned amateur kiteboarders compete in contests that have them racing, jumping, spinning, and freestyle. Newbies can try out colorful boards and kites on land before testing their skills on the water. Evening events include a Texas wine tasting and a South Texas seafood boil. www.spikite roundup.com

MAY 19-22

ASTORIA, OREGON

Northwest Bicentennial The first permanent U.S. settlement west of the Rocky Mountains, Astoria celebrates 200 years since its founding by the John Jacob Astor fur trading company. Events take place throughout the year, but opening

weekend (May 19) features family cruises on tall ships, an exhibit of works by Pacific Northwest artist Cleveland Rockwell (1837-1907), cultural performances and canoe races by the Chinook Nation and other Native American tribes, and, of course, birthday cake. www.astoria200.org

MAY 21-22

CASTROVILLE, CALIFORNIA

We Heart Artichokes Playing with your food is rewarded with cash prizes during the Castroville Artichoke Festival. Here in the U.S.'s Artichoke Capital, you can go head-to-head with others in vegetable-sculpting or artichoke-eating competitions, hop the bus to the fields for grower talks, sample an artichoke cupcake, and learn tips from artichoke-

JIALIANG QAO (UPPER). FARINA PHOTOGRAPHY (LOWER)



MAY 26-29 CORNING, NEW YORK

Loud and Clear At the second annual GlassFest,

Corning celebrates its heritage as a center of glassmaking since the 19th century (you probably have a CorningWare piece in your kitchen). Glass artists, called gaffers, from the Corning Museum of Glass create pieces live on stage in Centerway Square; vendors sell regional glass, ceramics, and jewelry along historic Market Street; and, at the FlameOff, professional glass artists from around the world face off to produce unique glassworks, such as this paperweight by Paul J. Stankard (right). www.glassfest.org

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cooking demos. "Anything you can do with a potato you can do with an artichoke," says executive director Denise Amerison. www.artichoke-festival.org

MAY 21-22

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

Run with History During the inaugural Run for the Dream, you'll be pounding the same ground the founding fathers once trod. The mostly flat route for the half-marathon, 8K, and one-mile fun run takes runners down Duke of Gloucester Street, Colonial Williamsburg's main thoroughfare, passing historic taverns, the courthouse, and the Governor's Palace. The finish line is at The College of William & Mary. Proceeds from the run go to An Achievable Dream schools and the Wounded Warriors Programs. www.runforachievable-dream.com

MAY 26-JUNE 5

HAY-ON-WYE, WALES

Welsh Tales With 30 bookshops, the tiny market town of Hay-on-Wye (pop. 1,500) lives up to its moniker of "booktown." The town, located on the Welsh-English border, celebrates its bookishness every year with the blockbuster literary Hay Festival. Headliners this year include author Philip Pullman, actress Vanessa Redgrave, filmmaker John Waters, and Nobel Peace laureate Mohamed ElBaradei. Take a break from books by exploring the moors and mountains of surrounding Brecon Beacons National Park. www.hayfestival.com/wales/

MAY 27-SEPTEMBER 20

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Gander at the Golden Age The private Hohenbuchau Collection is known for its assemblage of northern European baroque art. Although the group of about a hundred works has been on permanent loan to Vienna's Liechtenstein Museum, it hasn't been exhibited in its entirety until now. View works by Brueghel (both the Elder and the Younger), Rubens, and other 17th-century masters in the grand spaces of the Garden Palace, which houses the museum. www.liechtensteinmuseum.at/en

JUNE 1-AUGUST 15

ATHENS & EPIDAURUS, GREECE

Mediterranean Playgrounds Old meets new at the Athens & Epidaurus Festival, where contemporary artists and musicians perform amid age-old Greek ruins. Evocative venues include the Ancient Theatre in Epidaurus and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus on the southern slopes of the Acropolis in Athens. This year watch for performances by the Bolshoi Opera and France's Théâtre du Soleil. www.greek-festival.gr/index_en.asp

JUNE 4, 5, 9, & 11

MASADA, ISRAEL

Aida Marches On The UNESCO

World Heritage site of Masada serves as dramatic backdrop for Verdi's equally dramatic opera *Aida*. Last year's staging of *Nabucco* at this desert plateau overlooking the Dead Sea proved such a success for the Israeli Opera that a Masada season is set to be an annual event for the company. Performances begin at 10 p.m. so visitors can spend the day exploring the palace-fortress built by King Herod that became a refuge for Jewish rebels in the first century. www.aida-at-masada.com

U.S. Most concertgoers elect to pitch tents in the grassy fields surrounding the sound stages, leading to a nonstop communal party. In celebration of the event's tenth year, rhythm and blues legend Dr. John and The Original Meters will perform their 1974 album *Desitively Bonnaroo*, from which the festival got its name. (In New Orleans parlance, "bonnaroo" means "a really good time.") Other headliners include Eminem, Girl Talk, The Decemberists, and Ray Lamontagne. www.bonnaroo.com

New Haven Green to the University Theater and the historic courtyards of Yale University. Over 80 percent of the festival's programming is free, including the kickoff concert by cellist Yo-Yo Ma and his Silk Road Ensemble. You can also catch the contemporary moves of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, gyrate to conga drums in Haitian dance lessons, learn the fine art of storytelling from Indian artist Swati, and bike around the city with an expert guide, visiting art galleries. www.artidea.org



MAY 4-AUGUST 20 REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND

Hall of Sound Reykjavík inaugurates the new Harpa, the city's first full-scale concert hall, with a series of performances both ticketed and free by groups such as the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and the Icelandic Opera. Events culminate August 20 with the official inauguration of the building itself. Artist Olafur Eliasson designed the glass facade, which changes colors throughout the day. Inside, head to Munnharpan bistro for Nordic open-face sandwiches. <http://en.harpa.is/>

JUNE 4-NOVEMBER 27

VENICE, ITALY

Nations Illuminated "ILLUMInations" is the theme of the 54th Venice Biennale's International Art Exhibition, likely the world's most prestigious global contemporary art fair. Start at the Giardini ("the Gardens") with 29 national pavilions from Belgium to Korea. The U.S. pavilion offers an environment of sound, video, performance, and sculpture by Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla. Next stop: the Arsenale, a shipyard complex turned art space for a mix of nationalities. Maybe most intriguing are the hundreds of pop-up shows to hunt down, art map in hand, along the canals and narrow lanes of Venice. www.labbiennale.org

JUNE 9-12

MANCHESTER, TENNESSEE

Rhythm Nation Thousands of music lovers flock to rural Tennessee every June for Bonnaroo, one of the largest music festivals in the

JUNE 11

HONOLULU

Road to Royalty The King Kamehameha Floral Parade is one of the oldest parades in the nation (this is its 95th year) and likely the only one that celebrates a monarch in the U.S. Commemorating the Hawaiian king who united the islands by 1810, the parade features floats resplendent with tropical bromeliads and heliconia. Traditional female pa'u horseback riders, whose legs are covered in bright fabrics, represent the Royal Court and are led by a queen on horseback. The procession runs four miles from the lei-draped Kamehameha statue to Kapi'olani Park. http://hawaii.gov/dags/king_kamehameha_commission/

JUNE 11-25

NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Ivy League Ideas Yale University's hometown hosts the 15th annual International Festival of Arts & Ideas at venues ranging from the

JUNE 24

CUSCO, PERU

Solar Energy For the past 600 years, Inti Raymi (Celebration of the Sun) has heralded the Southern Hemisphere's summer and winter solstices. During winter solstice, the ancient Inca would honor the sun god, Inti, with sacrifices and offerings to ensure good crops. The day-long event now involves more than 500 performers dressed in traditional garb. A colorful procession wends its way from the sun temple, Qorikancha, to the ruins of the hillside fortress Sacsayhuamán, where a llama sacrifice is simulated and the high priest reads bloodstains to predict events for the year ahead. Be sure to book reserved seating for the ceremony well in advance. www.emufec.gob.pe/ingles/inti-raymi.html

Reported by Amy Alipio, Alison Brick, Karen Carmichael, Jean Lawlor Cohen, and Meghan Miner. Send events to aalipio@ngs.org.



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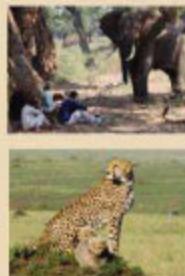
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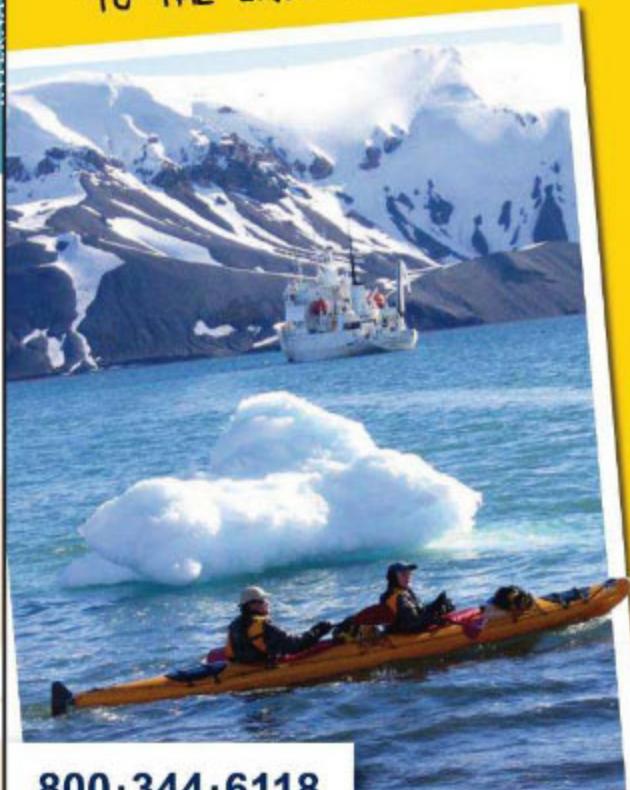


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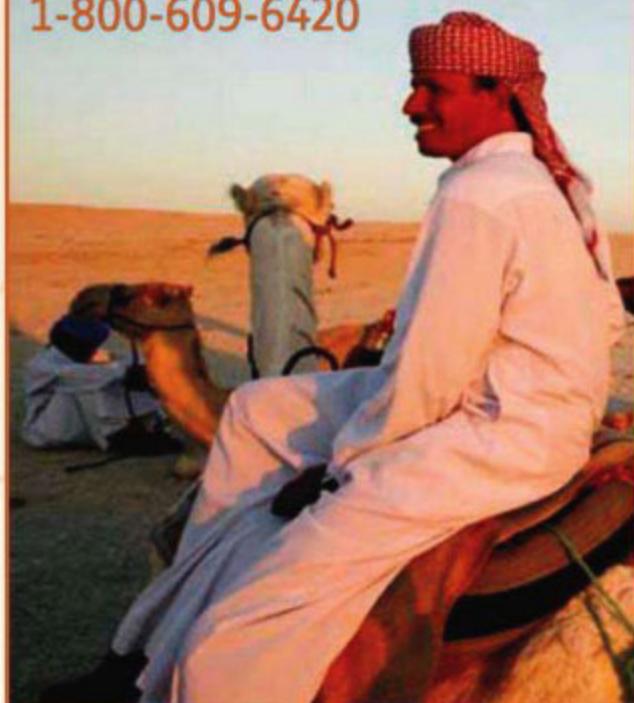
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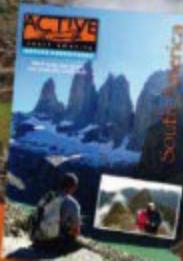
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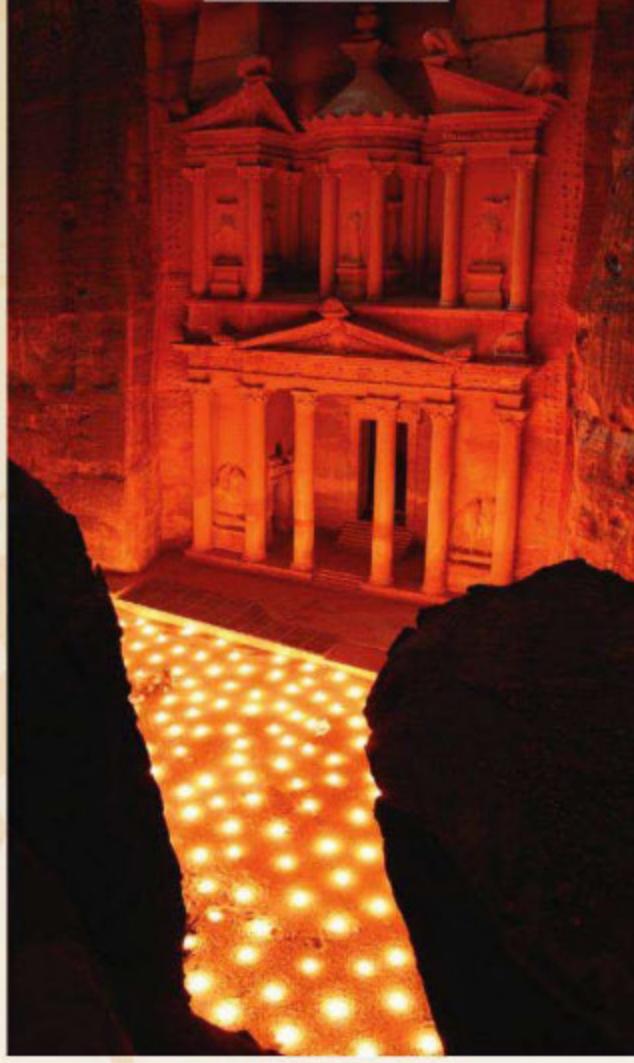
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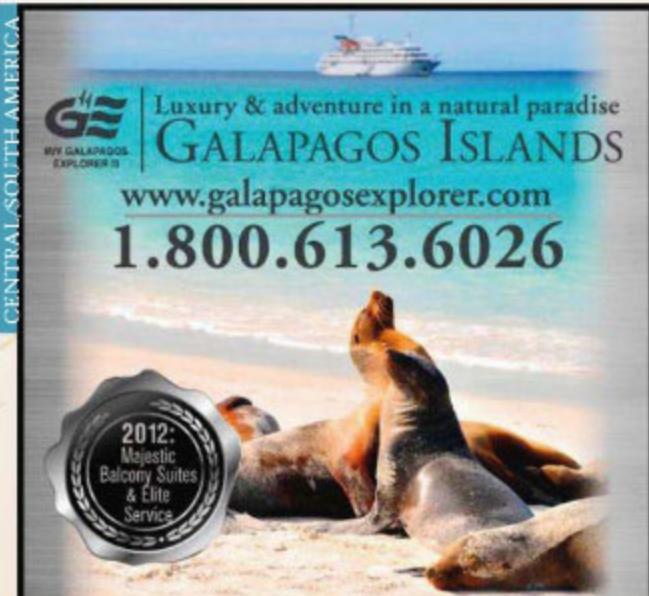
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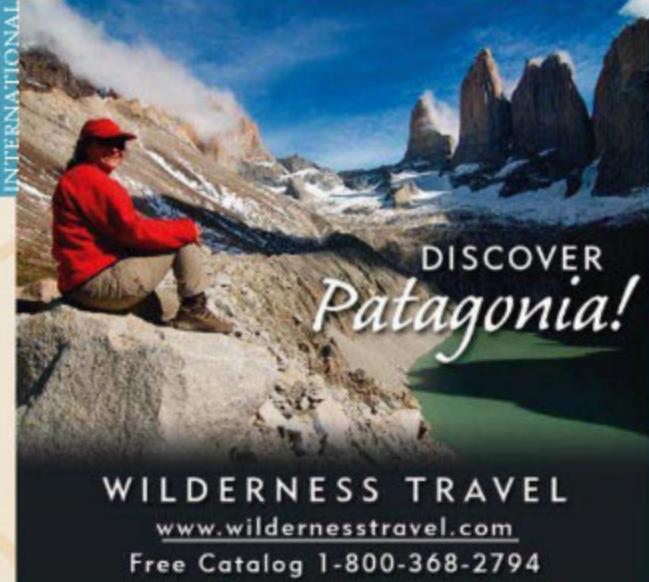
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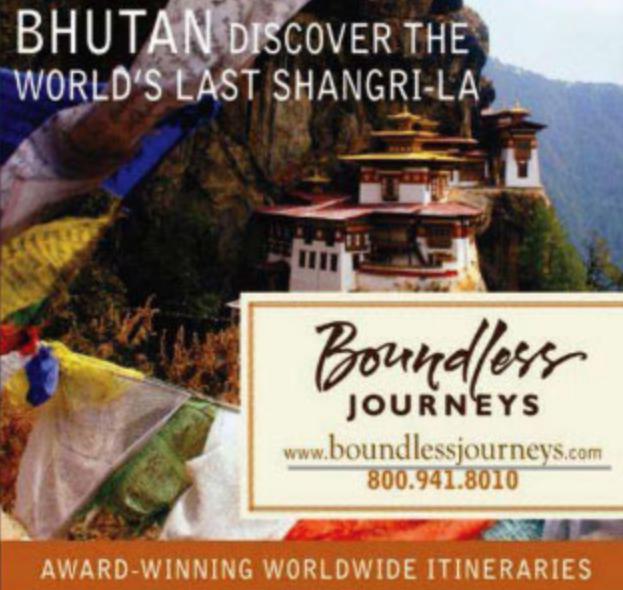


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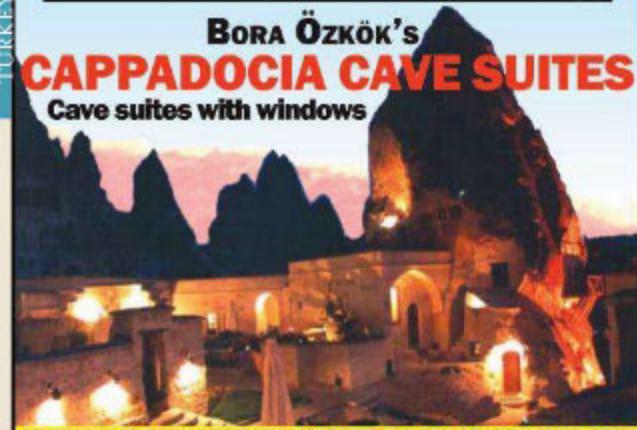


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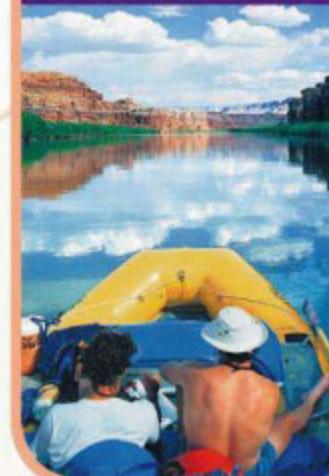
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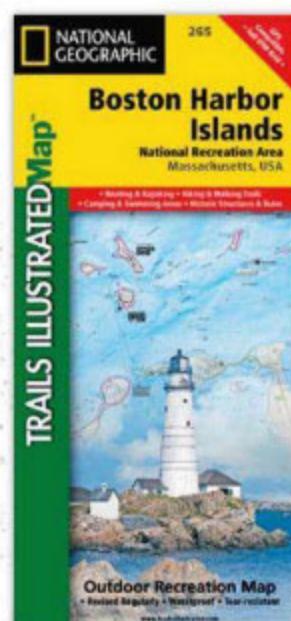
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Opera Under the Overpass

Photograph and text by Brian Yen

WHILE VISITING relatives in Hong Kong, I came across a bamboo amphitheater under a highway overpass, set up for a southern Chinese opera festival. I began talking with the hardworking troupe of singers, actors, and crew who would perform their four-hour-long show twice a day for nearly a week. They invited me backstage, and for the next few hours, I left the crowded and hectic pace of Hong Kong for a beautiful, rarely seen world reminiscent of yesteryear. The actors invited me for tea, and when I asked for their addresses so I could send them photos, they said they lived on the road. Perhaps being a traveler is what makes you friendlier to strangers, as they were certainly the most hospitable people I'd met in Hong Kong. The next morning I went back to say goodbye, but they'd already left; the stage was disassembled, and only a few piles of garbage remained. Each time I look at this photo, it reminds me of the troupe's work and dedication. I wonder where they are now.

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